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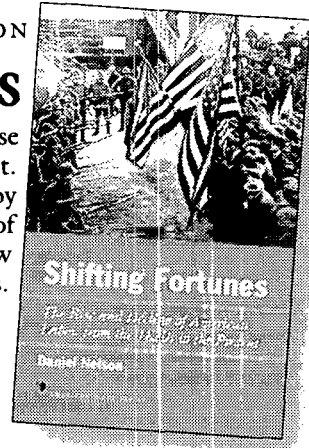


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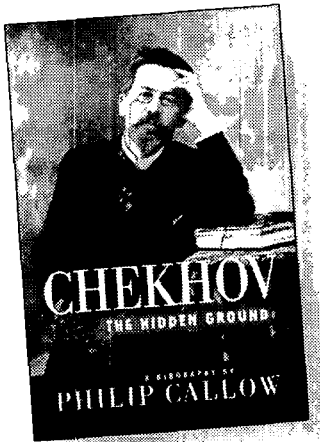
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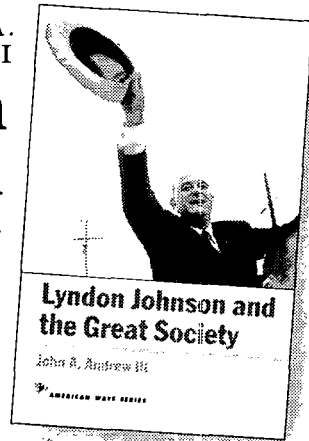
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Our interview with the leader of the Italian Democratic Party of the Left, Massimo D'Alema, suggests the difficulties faced by European social democracy as it struggles to adjust to, but also to resist, the material and ideological power of the market. These difficulties are ours too, here in the United States, though we approach them without a party or political tradition that embodies an alternative view of social organization. American politics and society have always been peculiarly vulnerable to market forces, and today vulnerability is the painful everyday experience of many Americans. That experience is examined here in four articles. Rashi Fein describes the HMO revolution that followed hard upon Clinton's failure to reform our medical system, and worries about the impact of marketed medicine on both the delivery and character of health care. Eric Freyfogle examines and criticizes the use of market mechanisms to deal with environmental pollution. Gerald Markowitz and David Rosner tell the story of what might best be called the class struggle over silicosis—the unrelenting fight of industry lobbyists against government regulations that would save workers from this terrible disease. And Philip Green demonstrates how market forces shape and degrade American television. ■ The Arguments section is also devoted to markets this quarter: What should be the left's position on free trade? How should we respond to the "creative destruction" of entrepreneurial capitalism? This is an ongoing *Dissent* project: to expose the harms that uncontrolled markets bring to ordinary men and women and to defend collective remedies. We welcome suggestions from readers about other experiences of market vulnerability that we should cover. ■ This issue also features two fascinating political/historical essays: Manning Marable's revealing analysis of the long-term connections between black nationalism and far-right politics; and Stephen F. Cohen's moving account of Nikolai Bukharin, sitting in one of Stalin's prisons, writing a novel about *How It All Began*. Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam is sometimes thought to stand on the left of American (and global) politics, but that perception is as wrong and, if on a vastly smaller scale, as damaging as the idea that Stalinism was a legitimate left politics. Intellectuals who make any kind of peace with Farrakhan will have to reckon with Marable's *Black Leadership*, from which the essay printed here was adapted. ■ We begin with some reflections on the current Washington melodrama—not only because that odd couple, sex and politics, is always interesting, but also because political melodrama is sometimes a clue to serious politics. What it suggests this time, it seems to me, is the ascendancy of litigation over every other form of political activity. Why bother with arguments or organizations, movements or campaigns, parties or lobbies, if you can hang your opponents in the courts?

-M.W.

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The President and the Prosecutor

Three Views on Politics and Personal Life

Jackson Lears

THE REAL scandal in Washington is not Clinton's sex life, but the government's ability to pry into it. The real threat to the republic is not the lack of "character" in the Oval Office, but the erosion of privacy rights for all Americans. The real crisis arises not from the president's supposed misconduct—which is little more than a cloud of rumors and allegations—but from the growing tendency to confuse authority with authoritarianism. Lamentations about moral decline, understandable as they may be, have helped to legitimate an appalling proliferation of police-state tactics.

How did we get ourselves into this mess? For starters, we have a rhetorical tradition combining meddlesome moralism with compulsive sincerity, stretching back to the early days of the republic. Rooted in the evangelical ethos, that tradition displayed the blend of righteousness and prudence still seen on tell-all TV shows. Evangelical reformers sought government power to enforce what most contemporary Americans would consider personal preferences: sabbath observance, say, or abstinence from alcohol. They succeeded until quite recently, and may be making a comeback in the idiom of health rather than salvation. The specter of Prohibition still stalks the land, animating the antifat phobia, the antitobacco crusade, and catastrophic "war on drugs."

Reformers have always assumed that the ills they addressed were not merely personal, that sobriety and sabbath keeping served the interests of social order, and that both were therefore fit subjects for political concern. But there was an alternative to these assumptions at the heart of nineteenth-century political culture. Liberal tradition allowed a larger domain for the personal; it sanctioned the claims

of the individual against those of the social order. Late-nineteenth-century jurists refined the individual's claims by formulating a doctrine of privacy rights. Louis Brandeis's published classic articulation of the doctrine may be seen as a high point in the new struggle of the personal against the political.

Privacy rights were part of a broader Victorian culture, committed to keeping certain areas of human experience hidden from public view. There was nothing wrong with reticence in principle; indeed, it may have been a necessary component of cultural meaning, as Rochelle Gurstein has intelligently argued in *The Repeal of Reticence*. The problem was not privacy per se but unequal access to it. The people drawing the lines between personal and political were privileged white men, and the resulting boundaries served their interests.

Consider the political consequences of the silence surrounding sex. This genteel tradition (or its twentieth century remnant) kept men's peccadilloes out of the public eye; it maintained a double standard by forbidding behavior to women that was winked at in men; it created a fictitious realm called "the private sphere" that served existing power relations by denying their existence.

So at any rate it seemed to the feminists of the 1960s and 1970s, who popularized the slogan "the personal is political." Their frustration was understandable; after more than a century of feminist struggle, the mythologies of domesticity seemed stronger than ever—above all the belief that the personal and political realms could be neatly separated, that conjugal relations could be divorced from power relations. Feminist critics were onto something important about the diffuse omnipresence of power.

The problems arose when the slogan ossified into a dogma. What had begun as a useful catchphrase became a reductionist formula: "The personal is [nothing but] political." The caricature of the feminist as humorless ideologue overlooks the vitality and variety of feminist thought. But it is in part an understandable response to this reductionism, which has promoted sweeping legal solutions to problems (such as sexual harassment) that sometimes require a more nuanced approach. As Jeffrey Rosen has argued in the *New York Times*, sexual harassment litigation "often spirals out of control because civil suits lack the procedural protections necessary to guard the privacy of the accused and all others with whom he comes in contact." This is especially true when the accused is a target of a special prosecutor's investigation.

BUT IT would be misogynist fantasy to locate the contemporary threat to privacy in the more puritanical strains of feminist legal thought. Consider the themes arising from the Monica Lewinsky controversy. Starr and his supporters exhibit the evangelical blend of righteousness and prurience, combined with a faint simulation of MacKinnonite feminism that is mostly Republican fantasy—the dream of closing the gender gap by capturing the righteous females. The whole is served up by the solemn sensationalists of the "mainstream" media. The personal has become political, with a vengeance.

Clearly a number of streams have fed into this slough of despond. Legalistic feminism is only a trickle. There are far more important sources of the crisis atmosphere. Right-wing moralism, here as in the "war on drugs," has

justified sweeping invasions of civil liberties. Journalistic pseudopopulism, now as in the past, has excused sloppy, invasive, and inaccurate reporting with the all-purpose claim that "the people want to know." Maybe the most significant source of the crisis is the most obvious: the Republican congressional majority that sent Starr on his mission in the first place.

But the problems raised by this controversy affect the rest of us as well as Bill Clinton. Our privacy rights remain under siege; the Fourth Amendment, prohibiting unreasonable search and seizure, has become virtually a dead letter. Starr's outrageous tactics—the surreptitious wiring of witnesses, the use of the grand jury as agency of intimidation—have become commonplace procedures for many prosecutors, not just "special" ones. And so have the reflexes that keep tabloid stories in circulation: the assumption that arrest, indictment, or even accusation are tantamount to conviction; the reckless disregard of the presumption of innocence.

The good news is that many Americans aren't buying what the media are selling. Opinion surveys, despite their ephemeral and unreliable nature, suggest at least some cause for hope: Americans are separating Clinton's actual performance in office from the allegations of his sexual misconduct. Does this mean that Americans are jaded, cynical, and indifferent to moral issues? Not necessarily. It may mean that they understand a proposition that is crucial for sustaining our privacy rights: the personal is not always political. ●

JACKSON LEARS is professor of history at Rutgers University.

Michael Tomasky

IF BILL CLINTON were impeached or forced to resign over the Lewinsky case, the incident might force a national examination of how men in power treat female subordinates. The most important question his alleged behavior raises, after all, is not whether a little adultery hinders a man's ability to make great and grave decisions; it surely does not. Rather,

the question is whether a man—president, bank president, legal partner, department head, what have you—who sees women primarily as carrying cases for glands and hormones should be involved in running the world. If Clinton behaved this way, and if his ouster meant we'd end up with new ground rules, then it might be not merely necessary

but salutary.

But one doubts this is the moral lesson our national instructors have in mind for us; if it were, then it would seem hard to explain why, in the millions of column inches and minutes of air time devoted to the Lewinsky matter, this issue has been so little discussed. What's much more likely to be waiting at the end of this road, instead, is that the investigation and criminalization of private behavior found wanting—that is to say, of (a)morality—will become routine.

How on earth is this happening? First, let's look at who's doing it, and why. Three forces are linking arms here. First, certain (but not all) segments of the right have been after Clinton over sex from Day One—Richard Mellon Scaife and perhaps others have, according to Arkansas journalist Gene Lyons, paid for snoopers to go down to Arkansas to fish out any and all women with whom Clinton may have been involved. Their motivation is simply political. Second, what Starr has been trying to do since the day the pathetic Linda Tripp knocked on his door—bring a criminal perjury charge against a citizen of the United States because he may have lied about his sex life—is, I'm willing to wager, utterly without precedent in modern America. His motivation is political, too, although in his case probably combined with some deep animus against a man he sees as an irresponsible libertine (Starr doesn't seem too concerned about the harassment of women in the workplace—if he feels any sympathy for Monica Lewinsky, he sure has an odd way of showing it).

The third force here is the press. At the same time that news coverage has become more entertainment friendly, the press in general has become grotesquely self-referential. Pundits write about themselves and each other, editors are stars; the mood is absurdly self-congratulatory. People may hate the media, but the media sure love the media. And so the press, besotted with power and self-regard, wants Clinton's scalp not for the standard ideological reasons but simply to prove that it can have it.

Thus do these three interests converge. Today, they meet outside Clinton's bedroom window. But if they manage to kick it in, will

they stop there? Let's say this president, a pro-choice, relatively (by Washington standards) pro-woman and pro-gay president, is brought down on a morals charge. Consider what might unfold in the weeks and months after he packs up and heads back to Arkansas. Junior Republicans in the House of Representatives take to the floor of the House to cry out that yes, the American people do want a president who lives by a strict personal code of morality, and it's high time such a morality was restored to Washington. Newt Gingrich and Trent Lott chime in to this effect, and Al Gore, who will find himself called upon to acquiesce and is probably feckless enough to do so, holds hands with Tipper while announcing that he, too, craves a "new honesty" in the capital's dealings with the American people. The "respectable" papers give their editorial approval to this ethos.

BECAUSE NO one really wants illicit political sex to stop, this might be enough to settle accounts in Washington for a while. But I doubt it; why should it, when there's so much more undiscovered perfidy afoot in the land? Will this congressman's fondness for the bottle be exposed? That senator's taste for little frilly numbers? This or the other cabinet member's little black book? Louche behavior and unseemly morality aren't hard to find in Washington, and any reporter with a Nexis terminal can spend an hour calling up quotes from Senator So-and-So about family values, thereby "justifying" the story on the basis of the senator's "hypocrisy." The rest of the press will pounce. If called upon, special and other federal prosecutors can trip the accused into lying in a heartbeat. And what high-powered prosecutors can do, ambitious district attorneys can do, too, if they put their minds to it. Beware, governors, state legislators, and county commissioners!

Next, because what happens in the Washington office of the Entertainment State reverberates out West, the cultural landscape will be scoured for other manifestations of perversion. Gore actually did one brave thing, in defending Ellen DeGeneres; there is a difference, a profound one, between a vice president applauding television's first openly gay

protagonist and a vice president denigrating the medium's most popular single mother. But under the new morality, Ellen might be well advised to rethink her career. Liberal, godless Hollywood would get the message and crank out even more moralizing movies (most movies always have been, which is why Bob Dole was so wrong, but now he'll be able to crow about having been right all along).

All this could turn out differently; it could be, for example, that bagging a president will prove, forgive the metaphor, orgasmic enough that the puritans will roll over and go to sleep for a while. And importantly (and thankfully), the people, according to all the polls, have resisted this hysteria. They know the ruling classes are decadent, but they also know that, under the standards by which Clinton is being judged, the working and middle classes are pretty decadent themselves—people understand that society cannot exist according to these standards; that if you cleansed every bank, law firm, university, and electrical repair shop of the boozers and cross-dressers and

adulterers, there'd be a dramatic shortage of banking and lawyering and educating and wiring in this country. But so far, anyway, every time the people say that they will not make their civic decisions on the basis of this prurience, the puritans start in again, trying to explain to the people how wrong they are.

In this single respect, the media are the most to blame. The political right and people like Starr can always be relied upon to lecture the rest of us about our morals. For the press, though, this is new. Great moral arbiters, that bunch (the public understands this, too). As I write these words, indications are that the private lives of the chattering class will soon be getting some ink. Well, let it flow. Then maybe we can drop all this and start thinking about the morality that matters, morality of policy, which is underscrutinized in more or less inverse proportion to the overscrutiny of bedroom morality. ●

MICHAEL TOMASKY is a political columnist for *New York* magazine.

Ellen Willis

AS BILL CLINTON looked me straight in the eye, tightened his jaw, and denied having sex with "that woman," I had a fantasy: suppose, on that historic *60 Minutes* episode in 1992, he had said, "Yes, I had an affair with Gennifer Flowers." And suppose Hillary had added, "Not every marriage is monogamous. Relationships are complicated, and ours is no exception."

Why is such candor unthinkable? After all, most of the voters who elected Clinton didn't believe his denial that he'd slept with Flowers. Yet declining to tell the lies that pay homage to virtue would have been a shocking, radical act. It would have shifted the debate from whether personal lapses from conservative sexual and familial values should disqualify a candidate for public office to a more basic issue: should public officials be required to conform to those values in the first place?

Listening to various commentators' nostalgia for the good old days of "Don't ask, don't tell," before those feminists decided that the

personal is political and oral sex made it onto *Nightline*, you would think that judging politicians' private lives is something new. On the contrary, candidates, especially for the presidency, have always been vetted by the family-values cops for marital respectability. Until Ronald Reagan broke the taboo, no divorced man had ever become president. (I always admired Nelson Rockefeller for divorcing his wife to marry the woman he loved, though it meant the end of his presidential prospects.) Open homosexuality is still beyond the pale, as is heterosexual cohabiting out of wedlock. Presidential wives are supposed to be supportive mates, preferably mothers, domestic minded, and never openly sexual. Indeed, during most of Clinton's presidency criticism of his personal life has centered less on his alleged affairs than on his refusal to put an uppity wife in her place.

What is new is the end of the trade-off that allowed politicians, in return for outward conformity, to lead a secret sexual life on the side.

This conspiracy of silence, upheld by the press, served to maintain strict public norms and the illusion that authority figures exemplified the morality they preached, while cutting powerful men some slack. (Needless to say, the deal has never been available to female candidates or political wives.) It also mystified sex, keeping the gritty details of respectable men's disreputable desires and practices from compromising the enforced "innocence" (that is, ignorance) of respectable women and children.

The breakdown of this corrupt bargain is part of our society's continuing revolt against Victorian morality, sexual hypocrisy, and a sexist double standard. From this perspective, open discussion of the realities of people's sex lives—including politicians' sex lives—is much to be preferred. In the past, Clinton has never hesitated to pander to the right by wrapping himself in the family-values flag. If revelations of his sexual proclivities cripple his ability to indulge in pious blather about the evils of "illegitimacy," I can only cheer.

Unfortunately, however, the new openness has also encouraged those so inclined to engage in sexual witch hunts. And ironically, even as some horrified liberals blame feminism for making the present inquisition possible, some conservatives have accused feminists of hypocrisy for not joining it. Why, demands *New York Post* columnist Steve Dunleavy, don't they "ravage Clinton the same way they ravaged Clarence Thomas"?

No doubt feminists' lack of enthusiasm for Kenneth Starr's crusade—like their skepticism about the Paula Jones case—has in part to do with pro-Clinton partisanship and even more to do with hatred of his enemies on the right. But it also reflects salutary second thoughts about moralistic, antisexual tendencies in the women's movement, including the impulse to expand the definition of sexual harassment beyond all reasonable bounds. Monica Lewinsky is young, but she is not a child, and she has not suggested that her alleged (at this writing it's still alleged) relationship with the president was anything but consensual. If anyone has victimized her it would seem to be her "friend" Linda Tripp and Starr himself.

True, the scenario here replicates one of the culture's hardier sexist clichés: the power-

ful older man amusing himself with a woman whose youth, inexperience, lack of worldly clout, and awe of him feed his ego. At the same time, it's not my impression that Clinton shares either the misogyny or the unquestioned assumption of dominance of a man like John F. Kennedy, who appears to have had a blanket contempt for wife and girlfriends alike. (At least in Clinton's case we can hope the oral sex went both ways.) Instead Clinton is insecure. He wants to please, to charm. Whatever mixed feelings he may have about Hillary—including the desire to rebel against her moral authority by being a bad boy—there's no doubt that he takes her seriously. I guess this is progress of a sort. Given the president's importance as a cultural icon, I'd rather he had an affair with, say, Barbra Streisand. But failure to transcend erotic stereotypes does not strike me as an impeachable offense.

Might Clinton's sexual habits affect his policies? Perhaps. I've often wondered whether defensiveness about charges of womanizing has fed into his efforts to placate social conservatives by echoing Dan Quayle on single motherhood and ending the entitlement to welfare. On the other hand, empathy with the desire for sexual freedom may have influenced his support for abortion rights. In any case, Jimmy Carter, who kept his lust tucked safely in his heart, was terrible on women's issues, and so was the faithful Reagan, while the echt-philanderer Ted Kennedy has been staunch. Speculating on the relevance of a president's personal relations with women to his public record on women's rights is an entertaining parlor game. But in the end it's the latter that counts.

What most clearly illuminates the connection between personal and political is not Clinton's sexual behavior but his lies about it. The moralists are still a powerful political force—and besides, it's a deeply ingrained axiom of masculine conventional wisdom that the proper response to being caught at infidelity is to deny everything. So Clinton's understandable reflex is to do what reporters would once, in effect, have done for him: lie. But this is the reflex of a dying culture. Bill can run, but he can't hide. His now admitted lie about Flowers has translated into wide-

spread skepticism about his present denial. And though no one outside the radical right wants to see it happen, if Starr can prove Clinton is lying about Lewinsky the president may well be brought down. For in that case he will have stranded himself not only on shaky legal ground but on his opponents' moral ground as well. To lie about having an affair is tacitly to accept—or anyway decline to contest—the idea that if the charge is true he is unfit for his office.

Many people interviewed about the scandal have said they don't care what Clinton may have done with Lewinsky, but do care if he is lying. Part of what they are saying, I suspect,

is that if the president won't forthrightly stand up to his tormentors, why should they? The truth is that no matter how hard Clinton tries to present himself as an upstanding family man, to the right he will always be an exemplar of sixties license. And so long as the public sees Clinton as a shamefaced liar, the moralists will have won, even if he keeps his job. They will keep winning until their targets are finally ready to say, "Yes, I've had sex outside my marriage. Next question?" ●

ELLEN WILLIS directs the cultural journalism program at New York University. This essay, with some differences, appeared in *Newsday*.

How It All Began

Nikolai Bukharin

Translated by George Shriver

With an Introduction by Stephen F. Cohen

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Interview with Massimo D'Alema

Giancarlo Bosetti

MASSIMO D'ALEMA became the secretary of Italy's Democratic Party of the Left (PDS) in 1994, when he replaced Achille Occhetto, the party leader who, five years earlier, began the transformation that led to the dissolution of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and the establishment in 1991 of this new political organization. In 1994 the PDS ran in national elections at the head of a coalition of "progressives," but was defeated by an alliance led by the television tycoon Silvio Berlusconi. Berlusconi's government fell in 1995. In the subsequent elections, D'Alema fashioned a new center-left alliance known as the "Olive Tree," including the Catholic People's Party (born from the dissolution of the Christian Democrats), various left groups, Greens, and liberal centrists. The Olive Tree's victory brought the Catholic moderate Romano Prodi to the head of the government and Walter Veltroni, the number-two man in the PDS, became vice premier. The new government acted decisively to enable Italy to join the European Monetary Union, an objective that seemed almost out of reach in the past because of the country's financial difficulties. It now seems certain that Italy will be part of the "Euro" from the beginning.

GIANCARLO BOSETTI: Today thirteen out of the fifteen Western European countries are governed by parties of the left or center-left. What probably arouses the greatest curiosity about a leader of the left is how much room he or she has for action. What practical margins are available these days to a political party that is in government and still considers itself "left"? They seem to be growing smaller in an era of global economy and competition, in a Europe

that abides by the Maastricht standards, when government programs are all subject to very strong constraints—reduction of the public-sector deficit and spending cuts for pensions, health, and social security. In these conditions, what does "the left" mean now?

MASSIMO D'ALEMA: I will try to answer the question by modifying it: the issue is not "how much room does the left have?" but "how much room does politics have?" However much room there is in Europe for politics (be it little or much), it is in fact almost totally occupied by the left. After the elections in Germany [scheduled to be held by fall 1998—Eds.], we shall probably have to delete the "almost." The curious and even charming paradox is that this resurgence has happened just when doubts have been raised about how much room the left has to act. So you start to wonder why European voters, after the neoliberal phase of recent years, are turning to the left in Great Britain, France—more or less everywhere. There are two reasons. The first is fear. European public opinion is afraid that the logic of global competition will destroy the forms of social and civil organization that have characterized our continent, the part of the world where life is best. That is why they turn to a political force with the antibodies to meet this threat. The second reason is political: the European left knew how to find a new life for itself and was willing to revise the social compromise that characterized social democracy in this century. A dual move: voters' fatigue and fear of neoliberalism, plus the offer of a modern and flexible form of social well-being.

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G.B.: The left spent many years building and then supporting postwar Europe's model of a welfare society. But the very fact that the parties and unions of the left fought for the welfare state led in the end to a long chain of

defeats. The left was accused of being conservative, defending a status quo, while the right seemed innovative.

M.D'A.: Let's say that European public opinion and the left met halfway. On one hand, society felt the pinch of insecurity after ten to fifteen years of neoliberal revolution. The mirage of a global competition that would "make us all rich" produced contradictory results. There were more opportunities but more anxieties as well. It made a new social pact necessary. On the other hand, there was a left that, partly because of its defeats, did not just continue twenty years of defensiveness, but wanted to try something new.

G.B.: Here we get back to my initial question: how much room is there for the left? Let's face the hardest aspect of this "new social compromise," the question of unemployment. You can't say that the problem was unforeseen. In 1993 a White Paper by Jacques Delors, then president of the European Community, outlined the problem on a Europe-wide scale. But since then individual governments and the European Community as a whole have been unable to solve the problem of structural unemployment; the numbers are higher than twenty million. If we want to speak of the political space of the left we have to talk about this.

M.D'A.: That's true. This is the great challenge, the greatest challenge that the left, political parties generally, and European governments have so far been unable to meet. Let's first make it clear what a strategy for fighting unemployment *cannot* be. Well, it can not be based on traditional policies of expansion. Naturally this does not mean that unemployment can be reduced without growth, which is still a necessary though not sufficient condition for creating jobs. OECD [Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development] forecasts contemplate a phase of expansion, but its effects on employment will be minimal if entrusted to spontaneous mechanisms.

G.B.: So what positive action can be taken?

M.D'A.: There are several kinds of action: a policy of support to industry that will stimu-

late growth in traditionally underdeveloped areas, such as southern Italy, Ireland, and Wales; Delors-style infrastructure policies (not just material but nonmaterial infrastructure, networks, telecommunications, and vocational training); education policies; policies for reducing working hours; policies for fostering flexibility in the labor market. All these have to be combined and accompanied by mobility management.

G.B.: What do you mean by "mobility management"?

M.D'A.: Here we touch on a sore spot for rigid systems, as in Italy. Structural unemployment can be partially converted into mobility; that is, to moving workers from job to job, shifting them from declining sectors to growing sectors. We lack the means first to provide a worker in a crisis sector of the economy with a subsidy in a transition phase, then give him the necessary training, and finally to find him a place in another sector. There cannot be serious talk of combating unemployment without social policies like these. And, at least for us in Italy, it is indispensable that the welfare state be reformed; it is static, corporative, and presumes that a given worker will always have the same job. Europe has a significant functioning model in Holland, where many of the policies I suggest have been introduced, including part-time work, a strong system of training and retooling workers, and welfare support for mobility. Make no mistake: shorter working hours are neither a magic wand nor a new Moloch or false god that can take on the past role of growth. Reducing working hours is helpful, but if we count on that alone we are bound to fail.

G.B.: Everybody who has studied the problem believes full employment is a thing of the past, that solutions must be found that permit populations to live with less work. There have been many fantasies in response, but it is clear that the main instrument will have to be the idea of "citizenship income." The formulas vary, as do the ways they are applied, but once European monetary union is a reality, once pension systems are brought in line with demographic trends, once public ac-

counts are no longer in imbalance—at that point conditions should allow a new page in welfare policy, at least in Europe: to guarantee every citizen a minimum for survival, thus permitting also the utmost mobility.

M.D'A.: I am convinced that what is needed is a universal, extensive, and neutral form of welfare, and this cannot be achieved by corporative means. The objective of full employment in the traditional sense of having the same job in permanence no longer seems realistic. So the goal we must set is for everyone to have a role in society through work. At the same time we must avoid at all costs the formation of a dual society. The European and the American models are both flawed from this point of view, because both produce dualism: in Europe it takes the form of long-term structural unemployment, while in the United States it takes the form of a division between a medium-high-skilled working world and a world of occasional work, poverty, and social marginality. The central objective of a new European welfare state must be to avoid this breach. There will still be unemployed people, but there must not be long-term unemployment and people excluded from the community. Society must make sure that everyone can survive the passage between the different phases of employment, unemployment, and new employment thanks to citizenship income and, together with that, the right to vocational training, which is decisive if we don't want the unemployed to remain "outside" forever. What is crucial in defining the left's room to move and the nature of the new social pact is this: creating an inclusive system in which a citizen who is jobless for a certain length of time will still remain "inside" a system that in this phase provides economic support, vocational training, the tools for finding a new job possibility, and a chance, if not today, then tomorrow. Strategies of employment and welfare-state reform move together, for only by operating together can they combat the danger of a society split in two.

G.B.: This may be the medium-term main thrust of a new economic and social policy according to Massimo D'Alema, but can we say the same thing for the European left?

What are the prospects of a project that unifies and coordinates social democratic parties across Europe?

M.D'A.: Everyone goes his own way, but one might say that in the present phase different routes are being compared. Some positions are a bit more liberal and others a bit more conservative, but there is greater awareness that, in the end, only transnational struggles can meet the employment problem. But let there be no mistake about it, the role of nation-states is still important and will continue to be so.

G.B.: The economy, however, moves rapidly beyond state confines.

M.D'A.: And indeed, nation-states must act within the framework of transnational macroeconomic strategies: the need for compatibility acts as a constraint and can undo policies. The European left is already discussing this, and possible common objectives are emerging, so there is a certain link. The fact that the June 1997 summit of European governments in Luxembourg finally talked about unemployment and decided to institute Europe-wide monitoring of national policies and to make more resources available is due to pressure by and discussion among European socialists. The summit did not, however, address the reduction of unemployment as a criterion of convergence for European unity. That would have been a real qualitative leap forward, which is what Delors asked for, but the time was not yet ripe for it.

G.B.: Does today's European left have a shared culture of political and social innovation? Or is its commonality today, among the different parties across borders, really just a matter of descent?

M.D'A.: An identity is being formed, and there are strong similarities in the cultural debates [within different European left parties—Eds.]. If you compare our positions on welfare state reform with the British Labor Party's "Report on Social Justice" you will find much accord.

G.B.: There are also strong contrasts; for instance, between the more state-activist line

of the French Socialists and the more liberal line of British New Labor, and within the German SPD between Oskar Lafontaine ("the left should mind the business of the left") and the innovative Gerhard Schroeder, who is aspiring to the party's leadership.

M.D'A.: The differences are along an axis running from the most conservative defense of the traditional social compromise to the most liberal positions. We might call it a line running from Lafontaine to Tony Blair by way of Lionel Jospin. But there is another line of differences: the line that concerns European union. The liberal left and the traditional social democratic left are also, on another axis, part of a political debate about a "national left" versus a "European left." From this standpoint, Blair is the most conservative, the most nationalist, although he is the most innovative figure on the liberal-conservative axis. So to understand the European left, you have to consider two coordinates.

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G.B.: The European left, including the Italian left, has been criticized for minimizing the differences between left and right, both in political practice and in thought. The claim is that, increasingly, there is no great difference between the two sides. It is a criticism of the left "by the left." Some intellectuals scorn what they brand the excessive opportunism of left leaders who take over "positions of the right," the culture of economic competition, and so forth, in order to win votes. To take just two examples, Perry Anderson's review of Norberto Bobbio's book *Right and Left* (in the Italian periodical *Reset*, January 1997) and Mitchell Cohen's essay "Why I'm Still 'Left'" (*Dissent*, Spring 1997). The same criticism has come from the Catholic Church, by one of its most important figures, Carlo Maria Cardinal Martini, archbishop of Milan. He argued that both the "so-called progressives" and the "so-called conservatives" seem insensitive to those on the margins of society, powerless outsiders, immigrants. He rebukes policies that fail to sustain institutions and agencies of human solidarity, leaving the task solely to the church. Clearly, this barb hurts the left more than the right.

M.D'A.: Let's be clear that the standpoint

of a political force that intends to govern is different from that of someone who wants to perform acts of solidarity. I see a difference here not between the left and the church but between politics and social commitment. There is also a socially committed left that is certainly much more attentive to the problems of the marginalized.

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G.B.: So is there a divorce between a government of the left and solidarity politics?

M.D'A.: No, but politics—unless you forgo a commitment to govern—aims at winning a majority of votes. So one must construct a balanced platform that is *attentive* to the interests of outsiders but cannot be *centered* on their interests, otherwise one cannot govern, that's all there is to it. There is a structural difference, different jobs, not a difference of culture. But there is also a left of solidarity, of nongovernmental organizations and of volunteers, who are also of the left, not just the church, and that left does another job: organizing solidarity. Politics must include solidarity but within the context of an equilibrium that must take account of the interests of the whole society. Otherwise politics would become only a matter of bearing witness. Now that would be very beautiful, but I would hope that the church does not contemplate a scheme in which the right governs while the left, together with the priests, organizes solidarity. This is a very traditional division of labor, and it has already been tried. I wonder if anyone wants to go back to it?

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G.B.: Is the left in power less sensitive to outsiders than the left in opposition?

M.D'A.: That is not true. We have been the government in Italy for a year and a half, and the immigration law we fostered was not what the right wanted. Indeed, the opposition in Parliament has been obstructionist on this score. Our law is concerned with crime and public-safety measures, certainly, but it also creates new forms of inclusion and recognizes newcomers' rights, including welfare rights, that did not exist before. At the same time we have proposed constitutional reforms that would allow immigrants who are not Italian citizens but live in Italy to vote in local elec-

tions. Our law protecting poor children is totally innovative, and I don't think the Berlusconi government ever contemplated anything like it. For the first time the Italian government has allocated a trillion lire for some 1.5 million children living below the poverty level. We are not uncaring about "the latecomers," but it is true that we try to deal with outsiders within a framework in which solidarity is *one piece* of policy, not its center. A political program has to be concerned with development and the production of wealth, too. Without that it is hard to practice solidarity.

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G.B.: The PDS does not govern alone. It is part of a center-left coalition, the Olive Tree, which includes Greens and liberal/Christian centrists. But what if the left governed alone? How would its program differ from that of the current coalition?

M.D'A.: The center-left is not just a coalition of political forces; this is just an epiphenomenal and secondary aspect, so to speak, of what is happening. In substance, the center-left represents a form of government that answers the needs of complex societies; it responds to the fact that the traditionally left bloc of society no longer composes a majority. Our governing political coalition reflects a social alliance that includes the forces of the middle class, the self-employed, white-collar workers, intellectuals, and the higher levels of skilled labor, the most open and innovative parts of the business world, the masses of women and the young who are traditionally outside the labor market, and hired help. This is the center-left. It is no accident that Blair, who has a single party and is allied with no one, also describes his policy as center-left. The center-left is a project of social alliance that goes beyond the traditional welfare state bloc. It is also a cultural project, based on a new syncretism joining the left with currents of religious thought and of liberal thought. I think that syncretism is useful for the evolution of political thought in moments of crisis, while ideological purity is a sign of sclerosis. For that matter, even Marxism, when it was originally conceived, was a form of syncretism.

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G.B.: But it had the features of system-

atic doctrine from the very start.

M.D'A.: Yet it arose from a mixture of heterogeneous elements: classical German philosophy, the tradition of the Enlightenment, the spirit of the French Revolution, and British economics. It was Marx who put them together and created a system out of lines of thought that were distant from each other. Likewise a new culture of the left is being formed in Europe. Whether it takes form as a single party or as alliances will depend on the different historical realities in each country. My point is that the center-left is the social and cultural formula for governing complex societies, a standpoint that is open to globalization but attentive to the interests of labor and solidarity.

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G.B.: But how much weight should the left have and how much the center? There are those in Italy who stress the role of coalition per se and those who stress the role of the left within a coalition.

M.D'A.: In Italy the center-left has taken shape as the Olive Tree, and the reason is very simple: the Catholic center wants to maintain its independent political identity for historical reasons, and will not be absorbed into the left. We already tried that road, when we created the progressive electoral front in 1994, and we lost. The Olive Tree was a great innovation, because it gave the center a chance to maintain its independence within an organic alliance with the left. The Olive Tree thus encouraged a split in the center, allowing the development of democratic bipolarity in Italy. In the past the center did not want to be forced to choose between alliance with the left and alliance with the right. I am convinced that Italian bipolarity will keep this new form.

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G.B.: So you think that there is something irreversible in this combination?

M.D'A.: There will be a center and a left in this alliance for a long time. The alliance among a European liberal-socialist left, a moderate democratic force that is basically Catholic, and an environmental force is now a strategic fact. Within this coalition, my aim is to foster a political formation that embraces the different components and traditions of the

Italian left, increases its representative potential, and can win over 30 percent of the electorate.

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G.B.: The major component of the Italian left is heir to the tradition of the Communist Party. When it was formed, there was a split-off that formed the Communist Refoundation Party. The latter now accounts for about 9 percent of the votes (as against 20 percent for the PDS). All this makes for a complex relationship between the PDS and its own heritage. The communist past and the past of the Italian communists are still rather hot issues. The PDS is often asked to “repent” for the errors and crimes of communism. But it is also true that the PDS’s strength partly comes from its communist heritage, and this made it possible for the party to become the linchpin of a new governing majority. In short, some people say “repent” for your past, while others say, “be thankful for it.” Who is right?

M.D’A.: There is some truth in both. On one hand it is surely necessary to think deeply about the past errors of the Italian left, the responsibilities of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), and the maintenance beyond any tolerable limit of links with “real socialism”: Togliatti’s Stalinism, Berlinguer’s limitations. I won’t say that we have already made all the possible criticisms. Discussion continues, but it is no longer a matter of political abjuration. It is no longer a political theme, in the sense that it is no longer a decisive problem for any substantial part of public opinion. Only 9 percent of our citizens perceive the relationship between PCI and PDS as a negative. We are conducting a survey on it.

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G.B.: A survey?

M.D’A.: Yes, we have been looking at how the public feels about continuity between the PDS and the PCI and, on the right, between the neofascist Italian Social Movement (MSI), which dissolved in 1995, and its heir, the right-wing National Alliance (AN). How many people view continuity positively and how many negatively? A portion of the public, about 10 percent or 11 percent, has good feelings about the PDS because they see its continuity with the

Communist Party as positive.

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G.B.: What about the right? Does the AN’s past hurt its legitimacy?

M.D’A.: Here, too, negative feelings about continuity are decreasing. But the AN has another problem, a problem outside Italy. While the Italian bourgeoisie has been rather generous with the AN, the broader European political world is less so, because the mainstream European right is antifascist. This is a serious problem for AN, I wouldn’t say of legitimization but of recognition.

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G.B.: From time to time Gianfranco Fini, the AN secretary, seems close to accelerating his Party’s reconsideration of the past.

M.D’A.: They are groping along, exploiting situations and improvising. Naturally I think they should be encouraged, not discouraged. I would not go farther than that in advancing or rejecting parallels. In any case I maintain that the relationship of the PDS to the old Communist Party—and this may sound banal—can be considered a burden and an opportunity at the same time, for there is no doubt that even the Italian Communist Party had its own reform movement within, and not just for propaganda. And that reform movement had a cultural originality of its own that did not come from orthodox communism. Paradoxically, the cultural tradition of the PCI was more open to liberal thought than were some European social democratic parties. It is no accident that European socialism does not perceive Gramsci as a totalitarian thinker, as did Augusto Del Noce [the Catholic spiritualist philosopher who inspired the ideology of the Christian Democratic Party in postwar Italy—Eds.], but as a heretical Marxist, even more than Karl Kautsky.

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G.B.: Nevertheless, Antonio Gramsci really was a communist—he was the PCI’s founder. That is not something Del Noce invented.

M.D’A.: Yes, I know full well that he was a communist. But Gramsci’s thought helped to break with communist orthodoxy, not just because of his criticism of Stalinism, but also his criticism of statism and the economics of

social democracy. And Gramsci still seems to me to have something vital to say. I'm not the only one convinced of this. It's also the evaluation by many politicians of the European left. The prime minister of Portugal wrote to the PDS congress: "Dear comrades of the PDS, welcome to European socialism, you who have contributed the innovative thinking of Antonio Gramsci."

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G.B.: Is the left still politically interesting for the European voting public? Can it still speak to the soul of Europeans, or is it just more capable of producing clever and pragmatic leaders? In other words: Blair, Jospin, and D'Alema are probably better than their adversaries, but then what great difference does it make?

M.D'A.: This is not the first time I have heard the thesis that the left has become the sole heir to political ability, *techné politiké*. It implies a corresponding idea—that the right is composed entirely of idiots. . . . Things are not like that. The left conducts the processes of economic recovery differently than the right, even when the left seems to be practicing "the same craft." In Italy we have taken action to balance public accounts in a way that has won

the recognition of the International Monetary Fund, but since we have been in government, salaried workers have seen their pay rise 4.9 percent while inflation rose 1.6 percent. So they have seen an increase of 3.3 percent (for the first time since 1992). Instead of cutting welfare spending, we introduced a highly progressive tax for entry into the European monetary system, with most of the burden on the medium-high brackets. There is a substantial, even brutal difference between left and right that I have summarized in these figures. The right would have acted differently, that is for sure. But there is more to be said in favor of the left: an ability to plan, to renew, and once again to pursue new ways of building society. Naturally the left confronts formidable problems in these pursuits. If attempts to reform and rebuild society are not merely to be the management of globalization, they will have to transcend the limits of the nation-state. Here I agree with Delors, who is ahead of Blair, because he understands that the margin for action grows narrower not only for the left but for politics in general without the supranational dimension. ●

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Lisa Anderson

Terror in Algeria

At the beginning of 1998, accounts of massacres in Algeria horrified world opinion. The start of the holy month of Ramadan brought reports that whole villages had been savagely attacked; men, women, and children were systematically slaughtered.

More than seventy thousand people were thought to have died in the strife that engulfed Algeria six years earlier, when the military stepped in to cancel parliamentary elections, depose the president, and outlaw the leading political party, the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS). Claiming that FIS was merely utilizing

democratic mechanisms to seize power that it would never relinquish, the military-backed regime proceeded to do exactly that: as violence between splinter groups from the outlawed and badly fractured FIS and the government's military forces escalated, the rulers staged a constitutional referendum and held carefully controlled presidential, parliamentary, and local elections designed to consolidate their power.

As the turmoil continued, many Algerians, including many in the erstwhile democratic opposition, suspended their skepticism about their government's dedication to democratic

politics and rallied to its support: the rulers seemed to be the only force capable of restoring calm. Algerian journalists and political figures once known for their vigorous opposition to a corrupt and antiquated regime toured the capitals of Europe and North America describing that same regime as the country's best hope for a solution, even as evidence accumulated that it was complicit in the prolonged violence and instability.

In the face of accusations that its failure to protect its citizens suggested ineptitude at best and deliberate policy at worst, the Algerian government reiterated its claim that the perpetrators were Islamist "terrorists," and adamantly refused international intervention, objecting strenuously to offers of aid—even humanitarian relief assistance—that could be construed as interference in the internal affairs of the country. Only under worldwide pressure did the regime consent to receive a mission of foreign ministers from the European Union in mid-January, and the outcome of their visit was inconclusive.

Continuing suspicions that the government itself was colluding in the massacres—permitting if not committing the atrocities—were compounded by the Algerian prime minister's announcement the day after the European ministers departed that the number of armed civilian "self-defense" units was to be increased. This, and reports that several thousand criminals had been released from Algerian jails in recent years, fueled speculation that some elements in the Algerian government wanted to utilize disorder and bloodshed to intimidate ordinary Algerians, thereby safeguarding its own continued hold on power.

The sorry spectacle in Algeria has served as a frustrating reminder of the limits of international influence in the post-cold war world: as in nearby Iraq and Libya, a determined regime has sacrificed tens of thousands of its own people in its thirst for power.

COULD ALGERIA'S fate have been avoided? How we answer that question depends on our answers to other questions. Was Algeria's tragedy a reflection of the malign influence of Islam in politics? There were certainly many observers, within and outside the

Islamic world, who thought so. Fear that the Islamist Welfare Party in Turkey, for example, shared what were seen as FIS's illiberal and antidemocratic inclinations prompted the Turkish military to hound it out of power; in January 1998, the Constitutional Court in Turkey banned the once-legal political party and barred its leader, a former prime minister, from politics. Yet there was very little in the Algerian story peculiar to Islam, political or otherwise. There was no evidence that FIS was either more or less attached to democratic politics than the regime it failed to dislodge. Democratic institutions in Algeria had not been intended to permit a real contest for power; on the contrary, they had been adopted precisely to strengthen the power of the ruling elite.

This point merits amplification. Most social scientists assume that while government incumbents may come and go, regimes are relatively stable. In much of the third world, however, the reverse is true. The Algerian military was happy to support single-party socialism throughout the cold war. When popular riots challenged the ruling party in 1988, the rulers abandoned the socialist cause with remarkable alacrity, embracing democracy virtually overnight. When democratic elections threatened the stability of the government in 1992, the rulers once again switched regimes, abandoning democratic institutions for rule by switchblade. Throughout these dizzying political experiments, the ruling elite, particularly the military clique at its center, remained remarkably stable. For better or worse, except insofar as it briefly gave voice to widespread popular disaffection, Islamic politics had little impact on the character of Algeria's political competition or the stability of its political elite.

If cultural and religious values do not explain the Algerian dilemma, perhaps the question is one of electoral engineering: the most indulgent interpretation of the Algerian government's post-coup elections rests on the premise that democratization can take place without participation of the parties that would poll the most votes. Insofar as democracy is fundamentally about the institutionalization of uncertainty in politics, limited pluralism may better guarantee that outcome than unlimited

participation. Certainly the ruling elite will be more tolerant of opposition if it is circumscribed by mutual agreement on the fundamental rules of the game, however much that may limit participation of other dissenting voices. Perhaps, as its apologists insist, the limits of democracy in Turkey are essential to its very existence and therefore to any prospect of its future evolution.

Conceivably that is so, although once again, Algeria does not provide clear and satisfying confirmation. The tactics of the antagonists in the current fighting are eerily reminiscent of the Algerian revolution, when as many as a million people are said to have died, many of them victims of unspeakable savagery. This history is, mercifully, quite exceptional. We should be wary of any rush to generalize. Iran, Turkey, and Algeria are all struggling to widen the circle of political inclusion and deepen the realm of uncertainty that is the hallmark of democratic politics. For ruling elites who, whether by conviction or by interest, have trouble imagining themselves out of power, that is a very difficult set of tasks.

COMPLICATED AS these questions are in Iran and Turkey, however, they are not now spilling the blood of thousands of citizens. Algeria poses an additional dilemma for advocates of democracy. Whether or not the collapse of Algeria's democratic experiment could have been avoided, it was not. We now

face the difficult task not of installing democracy but of restoring peace. There is little evidence that the Algerian rulers are capable of providing either the ideological vision or the institutional foundation for democracy; on the contrary, they appear to be willing to sacrifice the welfare of the Algerian people for as long as they feel their continued hold on power is insecure. The Algerian regime's proud and suspicious reactions to expressions of concern from outside suggest that the only offers of aid they will entertain will be measures that further strengthen their own hold on power. Thus have they participated energetically in multilateral security discussions aimed at developing common approaches to combating "Islamic terrorism" while rejecting offers of humanitarian assistance. Is the restoration of peace in Algeria—a necessary condition for any moves towards democracy in the future—worth the price of shoring up a vicious government? Or should tens of thousands more Algerians be sacrificed in the hope that the regime will ultimately lose heart and agree to humanitarian assistance and political compromise? Unfortunately, Western failure to intervene on behalf of the country's fledgling democratic institutions and values six years ago now leaves us forced to choose between such dreadful alternatives. ●

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THE EDITORS

Mobutu Redux?

David Aronson

IN OCTOBER 1996 a rebellion broke out in eastern Zaire and spread with astonishing rapidity from one end of the country to the other, toppling in the course of seven months the thirty-year dictatorship of Mobutu Sese Seko. For those with an interest in Zaire—as for Zaireans themselves—the unfolding history of that rebellion has entailed a gradual, painful process of disillusionment. At times, as belated revelations of rebel atrocities appeared in the press, the experience has been like awakening inside a Hitchcock movie, where the seemingly reliable turn out to be suspect, and only the shrill, crazy, or conspiracy-minded see things as they are.

The rebellion had two sources. The Rwandan genocide of 1994, in which as many as eight hundred thousand Tutsi and moderate Hutu were slaughtered in one of the most concentrated killing sprees in history, ended when Tutsi rebels seized the Rwandan capital, Kigali, in July of that year, sending over a million Hutu refugees across the border into neighboring Zaire. The plight of these refugees attracted widespread media attention, and the international community, which perhaps felt a twinge of guilt at its prevarications during the genocide, mounted a massive relief effort.¹

But among the refugees who fled to Zaire were many who had actively participated in the killings, and within months they had reestablished their political and military supremacy inside the camps. From these safe havens, they launched insurgencies into Rwanda and, in collaboration with local politicians, conducted pogroms against Zairean Tutsi. Some aid agencies pulled out of the camps, unwilling to facilitate such acts; others, like the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

(UNHCR), called repeatedly for armed intervention to weed the killers from the genuine refugees, but felt they had no choice but to continue providing relief. For over two years, from July 1994 to October 1996, the situation festered, as central Africa sank from the news.

A thousand miles to the west, in Zaire's crumbling capital of Kinshasa, Mobutu's kleptocracy was in its death throes. The old man, abandoned by his cold-war allies, his body wracked by prostate cancer, spent most of his time convalescing in Monaco or Aix-en-Provence; on his few visits to Zaire, he preferred his remote jungle enclave of Gbadoalite, a fantasy of marble fountains and glass palaces erected on the site of the mud-hut village where he'd been born.

In 1991, Mobutu had bowed to international pressure and announced that he would form a national assembly to draft a constitution and electoral laws. His heavy-handed efforts to stage-manage the assembly provoked a cycle of popular demonstrations and crack-downs, and led, ultimately, to the selection of Etienne Tshisekedi, Zaire's most prominent dissident, as prime minister. But Tshisekedi was unable to wrest real power from Mobutu, and a subsequent mediation effort led by Herman Cohen, the American assistant secretary of state for African affairs, resulted in Tshisekedi's ouster and replacement by a Mobutu ally.²

The political stasis that ensued discouraged all but the hardiest of Zaire watchers, and as the country continued its collapse a mood of profound pessimism pervaded talk of its future. Mobutu's parasitic brand of corruption had long since impoverished the country: in the mid-1980s, according to the *New York Times*, one child out of two was dying by the age of five. But in the 1990s, with inflation occasionally spurting to 20,000 percent, the state and its few remaining institutions essen-

tially flat-lined. The country's production of copper, cobalt, diamonds, and other minerals all but ceased. Per capita Gross National Product sank to \$120 a year, and the country regularly topped the United Nations Development Program misery index, a mix of several quality-of-life indicators.

SO WHEN a group of Zairean Tutsi took up arms in self-defense last October and vowed to march on the capital, many observers applauded their initiative as long overdue, even while doubting their capacity to bring off a successful revolt. Yet in a matter of weeks they had cleared the camps, pushed six hundred thousand to seven hundred thousand refugees back into Rwanda, and established possession of a strip of territory running from Bukavu to Goma along Lake Kivu. The spokesperson and soon (putative) leader of the rebels, the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of the Congo (ADFL), was a gregarious, beaming fellow named Laurent Desiré Kabila, a peripatetic ex-revolutionary from the 1960s.

From the beginning, there were indications that something was awry—an archbishop assassinated under mysterious circumstances, allegations of a massacre at a local hospital—but in its first few months the news about the rebels was generally positive. “I can go to market with money in my hand and no one disturbs me now,” one Bukavu resident was widely quoted as saying, marveling at the change from the old regime, when soldiers would routinely harass the population for money and goods. Prominent American Zaire watchers weighed in on behalf of the rebels. Salih Booker, the director of African Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, declared the rebels “the armed wing of the democratic opposition” to Mobutu. Roger Winter, the head of the U.S. Committee for Refugees, spent four days with Kabila in eastern Zaire and on his return argued that “very often, governments are not good. Sometimes, rebels are better than governments. That was the case with George Washington.” He went on to praise the rebels’ leadership and discipline, and suggested they were being warmly received by the local population.

By contrast, the ADFL’s opponents seemed either compromised or ludicrous. One of Winter’s January 1997 briefings in Washington was attended by a group of Zaireans who denounced him for supporting the rebellion; when one of them spoke up for the Mai-Mai, a group of rebels who had been kicked out of the ADFL early on, several people in the audience snickered. Believers in the protective powers of sacred water, the Mai-Mai go into battle nude, draped with faucets and other bathroom fixtures. Equally implausible were representatives from the Schiller Institute, an outgrowth of Lyndon Larouche’s party, who attended several meetings around Washington, claiming, with a weird, unblinking intensity, that the British Privy Council was sponsoring genocide in Central Africa.

The debate about who the rebels were and what they wanted was not confined to the fringes, however, nor was it simply academic. At issue was whether the United States should participate in the Canadian initiative to send a multinational force (MNF) to rescue the remaining Hutu refugees who had fled west, into the Congo rainforest, after the rebels had cleared the camps. Reports on their number and condition were conflicting and confused. France was eager to send a force, but lacked the credibility to intervene unilaterally: it was widely believed that France was more interested in propping up Mobutu than rescuing refugees. And since the United States was the only other power capable of mounting a rescue operation, the debate, by extension, was about whether an MNF was really needed.

At this point an odd assortment of voices started to harmonize. Since the death in 1993 of eighteen servicemen in Mogadishu, Somalia, the United States has been deeply reluctant to send troops to Africa. Indeed, that experience was probably the single most important factor guiding the American response to the Rwandan genocide. Faced with another African disaster of unknown proportions, the United States opted, as it had in 1994, to minimize the situation. Officials consistently downplayed—and on occasion may simply have lied about—the number and plight of refugees remaining in Zaire.³

The administration was not alone, how-

ever, in its reluctance to send in soldiers. The international human-rights community was deeply divided on the issue. Some observers claimed that hundreds of thousands of refugees had fled the advancing Tutsi-dominated army; without any readily identifiable access to food or water, they were presumed to be at risk of perishing. Fielding a military force to help repatriate or resettle these refugees was the only way, these advocates argued, to prevent a "massive" humanitarian catastrophe.

Other observers felt that there were larger issues involved. The rebels had cleared the camps housing the Hutu genocidaires—which the international community had notably failed to do—and were now challenging a brutal thirty-year dictatorship. Sending in the marines might freeze the situation on the ground, giving Mobutu time to rally his forces and defeat the rebels. Many who felt this way, including myself, dismissed the early reports of ADFL massacres as French or Mobutuist propaganda; to the extent that killings were actually occurring, we believed that they were probably attributable to the genocidaires and/or reflected the terrible but inevitable consequences of war. As one commentator noted, "It is an observable fact that in wars people get killed."⁴

AT HEART, this was a debate not just about Zaire but about the nature and purpose of humanitarian intervention. Since the secession of Biafra from Nigeria in 1967, it has become increasingly clear that humanitarian intervention can prolong or exacerbate the political conditions that give rise to the humanitarian emergency in the first place. Supplies meant for the civilian population are traded for war materiel, as in Somalia; the condition of women and children is used to manipulate world opinion, buttressing the regimes responsible for their plight, as in Biafra and Ethiopia; refugee camps established by the humanitarian community become supply sources and staging grounds for the most vicious of insurgents, as in Thailand and Zaire. The crisis in Zaire seemed tailor-made for those arguing that the international community needed to start thinking more clearheadedly about the political implications

of humanitarian intervention.

And so while French authorities spoke darkly of a "conspiracy of silence" regarding the refugees, and a UNHCR spokesperson declared that the rebels were practicing "genocide by starvation," the debate in the United States was about whether the political destiny of Zaire should be held hostage to the fate of an unknown number of refugees—many of whom were suspected genocidaires. But just as this debate was reaching a crescendo, the refugees themselves disappeared.

Zaire is usually described as the size of western Europe or of the United States east of the Mississippi. This is misleading. There are perhaps a couple of hundred miles of paved roads in the entire country. The rest has reverted to bush, and the landscape is a cathedral gloom of rainforest laced with the waterways of the river basin and pocked here and there with conglomerations of mud or wood shacks. It was into this vastness that the refugees had fled, and from about December 1996 to March 1997 no one knew what had become of them.

During this time, the rebels continued their astonishing advance. Each week they seemed to shave off another slice of territory, and in their giddiness adopted a nickname, the Simbas (or Lions, in Swahili), and stamped a figure of Walt Disney's Lion King on their flag and business cards. By March 14, they had seized Kisangani, the most important town in the northeast. By April 4, they had taken Mbuji Mayi, a diamond town to the southwest, and on April 9 they took Lubumbashi, Zaire's second most important city and the capital of the mineral-rich province of Katanga.

As the rebels gained territory, many independent observers—again, I include myself—became preoccupied with using them as leverage to force Mobutu out of power. We hoped, and let hope guide our thinking, that Kabila would form a coalition with Zaire's vibrant civil society and with the nonviolent democratic opposition in Kinshasa, and urged U.S. policy makers to foster a dialogue between them. Instead, the United States continued to marginalize these groups in favor of Mobutu. In South Africa, negotiations with Mobutu's nephew Honoré Ngabanda, a bully and petty

tyrant nicknamed the "Terminator," fell apart when Nelson Mandela prematurely announced that talks were agreed upon: Kabila promptly denied it, and Ngabanda nonchalantly announced that he was there shopping for shoes. When, after arduous diplomatic wrangling, the United States and South Africa finally did arrange for Mobutu and Kabila to meet, on the SAS *Outeniqua*, a South African icebreaker, the "peace talks" did little more than give Kabila a chance to snub Mandela and rub his own imminent victory in Mobutu's face.

On May 17, 1997, ADFL troops, somewhat anticlimactically, entered Kinshasa to the guarded enthusiasm of the local population. Mobutu fled, first to Gbadolite, and then, as the ADFL advanced on him there, to Morocco. It is said that Mobutu's own troops, enraged at being abandoned, fired on the old dictator's cargo plane as he flew into exile. Kabila's first act was to change the country's name to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

IT WAS at about this time that many of the "missing" refugees began reappearing, scattered over the south, north, and west of the country. They were, for the most part, in dire condition, and their stories confirmed everyone's worst fears. Finally, in the English-language press, there began to appear exposés of the ADFL's crimes during their long march westward. "First they separated the girls from the boys," said one girl, interviewed by a UNICEF team. "And they shot the boys, and then they cut them in half." "So that," another girl added, "if they revived they wouldn't be able to escape." On the basis of very preliminary information, Roberto Garreton, the original chief of the UN team sent to investigate the massacres, identified 134 alleged incidents of mass killings by ADFL troops, and indicated that they might be widespread and indiscriminate enough to constitute "acts of genocide." That number has since climbed to over two hundred, and as of this writing the UN team has yet to make it into the field.

Yet even as the extent of the killings became apparent, the vast machinery of the world's financial and diplomatic institutions was locking Kabila into place. The World Bank

scheduled a "Friends of Congo" meeting for early December 1997, and proposed creating a \$4 billion "trust fund" to help reincorporate Congo into the international economy. Asked about the implications of assisting a government that may have come to power with "acts of genocide" on its hands, a bank official stated that the bank does not take a position on the ways governments come to power and that allegations of massacres are beyond the bank's mandate.

The U.S. government, which by contrast is obliged to give lip service to certain norms of international behavior, has been going back and forth on whether to predicate its assistance to Kabila on his allowing the UN team unimpeded access to the country. In October 1997, after months of wrangling, Kabila finally promised UN Ambassador Bill Richardson that the probe would be allowed to proceed.

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But Kabila immediately backtracked, saying that any attempt to link the investigation with Congo's reconstruction would be a "vast conspiracy" to impede the country's progress. "Our cooperation is not guaranteed if the investigation team strays from the set rules," he added. And as of this writing, in mid-January, the probe has yet to begin its work.

In fact, Kabila probably has little to worry about. The Clinton administration seems determined to cooperate with the new regime come what may, and in a preemptive mode has been declaring its sympathy with Kabila's complaint that the UN and human-rights organizations are seeking to impose Western values on Africa. "We have to respect the African point of view," said one official, as though revulsion at massacres were a uniquely Western fetish. Another high-ranking U.S. official exclaimed before an assembly of nongovernmental organizations and human-rights representatives that it would be best if everyone "just shut up" about the alleged massacres. And on her recent foray to the country in December 1997, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright promised Kabila forty million dollars in U.S. aid, even as he, in their joint press conference, fulminated against a jailed opposition figure. Albright's toadying to Kabila prompted the *New York Times* to remark that this administration's African policies "eerily mimic those of the past," when cold-war imperatives drove the United States to support even the most heinous of dictatorships. Human rights groups were equally harsh in their assessments.

Indeed, not since the 1980s, when the two were colliding over Central America, has the relationship between the U.S. government and the international human-rights

community been as acrimonious as it is today over U.S. policy in Congo. Why the United States is so committed to Kabila is far from clear, but allegations are beginning to surface that the United States played a larger role in the war than it has admitted. The allegations are deemed preposterous by administration officials, yet *Le Monde*, *Jeune Afrique*, Human Rights Watch, Physicians for Human Rights, and the *Boston Globe* have all published reports indicating that the United States may not have been wholly forthcoming about what it knew and did during the war.

The news from Congo continues to be grim. Local human rights monitors report that the situation is no better than it was under Mobutu. Professors disappear in the night; newspaper editors are jailed and beaten. Property is seized. There are, in addition, reliable accounts that Kabila is padding his bank accounts. Early promises that elections would be forthcoming seem to have slipped off the agenda. Indeed, Kabila's statements suggest he has only a tenuous grasp of basic political and economic realities. He's suggested there ought to be a television in every hut, urged the formation of a six hundred thousand-man army, and recently declared Lingala, spoken in the western half of the country, a "dirty language." What all this means for ordinary Zaireans is captured by the recent plaint of one peasant woman. "It used to be I gave them my money and the soldiers left me alone," she said. "Now they beat me anyway." ●

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1. As hundreds of thousands of people were being slaughtered in the late spring of 1994, the Clinton administration had ordered officials not to call what was happening in Rwanda a genocide lest that obligate us to do something about it. Instead, the United States led the drive to gut the UN's small peacekeeping presence. The Canadian general in charge of that force has stated that he could have stopped the genocide if he'd been given five thousand troops.

2. Soon after his tenure at State, Cohen, along with two European associates, would, according to the French news-

paper *Liberation*, receive a \$600,000 contract from Mobutu for "political communications."

3. During the height of the controversy, for example, the U.S. ambassador to Rwanda, Robert Gribben, estimated that there were "tens or twenties of thousands of refugees" who wanted to return. Since then, some 225,000 have been voluntarily repatriated, and some 200,000 are feared still to be missing.

4. Though the decision to nix the Canadian plan was probably the Pentagon's, these voices carried the day publicly and gave legitimacy and rationale to the decision.

Canada: The Difficult Legacies of Left-Wing Populism

Jane Jenson and Martin Papillon

DURING THE 1997 campaign Alexa McDonough, leader of Canada's federal social democrats, announced her ambitions for the election. She did not expect to form the government nor even to become the official opposition. Her first goal was simply to make a respectable showing, so as to allow the New Democratic Party to move beyond the disastrous 1993 results that took it from forty-three to a mere nine members of Parliament (MPs). By dropping below twelve members, the NDP had forfeited its "official party" status, thereby losing both a large chunk of its financial base and its guaranteed participation in Question Period and House committees. McDonough claimed that, with even a small contingent in the House of Commons the NDP could speak for progressive forces against the right-wing, market-oriented policies of the other parties.

The leader's disarmingly frank campaign statements effectively released the federal NDP from any pretense that its short-term aim was to govern, something the federal party has never come close to doing. (In the ten elections between its founding in 1961 and 1988, the NDP's popular vote averaged 17 percent.) Measured against this more limited target, the 1997 election was a success for the new leader. There are now twenty-one New Democrats in the House. For the first time ever NDP candidates in the Atlantic provinces toppled Liberal cabinet ministers as well as other sitting MPs to take eight ridings.

Yet if in 1997 the horizon brightened for the federal NDP, it is still too early to talk of a new day for social democracy in federal politics. After 1993 the NDP did launch a search for new directions. Nonetheless, the party re-

mains trapped by its left-wing populist past. It stands foursquare for pan-Canadian social programs and against threats to Canada's economic sovereignty coming from the international economy, but the posture is more defensive than propositional. For several decades the caucus has been the elected voice for the causes of the broad left, becoming, in effect, the parliamentary wing of progressive social movements. Thus, New Democrats are the conscience of Parliament, but this role may limit their capacity to articulate a forward-looking alternative to neoliberalism.

Contentless Populism

McDonough's limited ambitions for the 1997 campaign might have surprised those who have frequently heard the NDP accused of "electoralism," but a closer look reveals them to be quite consistent with the past. The NDP's populism promotes a vision of society divided between the "Us" of ordinary Canadians and the "Them" of powerful economic, political and transnational elites. The political point of this populism is that the NDP must have a significant presence in Parliament to speak for "Us." It does not depend on developing concrete policies or legislative proposals.

The New Democrats' contentless populism initially had two sources: internal pluralism and electoralism. Like most social democratic parties in the first postwar decades, the NDP housed proponents of both "revisionism" and "radicalism." In Canada, this programmatic pluralism has been magnified by the diverse socioeconomic conditions faced by the different provincial wings of the party, some of which (particularly in the western provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia) regularly win office.

As recognition spread in the 1970s that traditional Keynesianism was unworkable, a debate over its replacement emerged in

Canada, as in most other countries. If New Democrats from central Canada pushed industrial strategies (which would directly benefit Ontario, where the overwhelming proportion of Canada's industrial production is located), those from the West generally had plans for resource-driven development. Such issues remain controversial. For instance, can a provincial NDP government promote policies that differ from those of the federal party? A recent example of such conflicts—one among many—came when the New Democratic government of British Columbia decided to open the first-growth Clayoquot Sound to clear-cut logging. This decision provoked long-time federal MP Svend Robinson to join front-line protests against the NDP government of his home province.

Constitutional politics also ran afoul of internal pluralism. For example, the federal party, led by Ed Broadbent at the time, recognized Quebec as a "distinct society" despite opposition from western members and provincial governments. Then in 1992, federal leader Audrey McLaughlin led her caucus to support the Charlottetown Accord, which would have amended the Constitution to recognize Quebec's special status, despite the opposition of many traditional NDP allies in the women's movement, Aboriginal groups, and the western provinces.¹

Populist politics is not surprising in a federation of relatively autonomous provincial parties, on which the federal party depends for much of its financing. An "Us" against "Them" discourse with very little content offers the federal NDP a way to avoid policy controversy.

The second source of contentless populism is electoral strategy. When Broadbent became leader of the federal party in 1975, Us-against-Themism was used to attract protest votes. The party started to rely on the advice of pollsters and hired consultants, whose soundings uncovered voter distrust of the NDP's economic program but positive assessments of its defense of social programs. Increasingly, strategists crafted campaigns around social justice themes—and around "Ed," seeking to cash in on Broadbent's personal popularity.

In consequence, beginning in the mid-1970s when state spending and state interven-

tion were challenged by deficit talk and neoliberalism, the NDP steadily divested itself of a capacity for economic analysis. Party debates about what economic policy might replace Keynesianism were stillborn. In election campaigns economic themes were carefully avoided. The party focused instead on defending existing social programs.

Coalition Politics

Populism is now deeply entrenched in the federal party. Since the 1980s, however, it has taken on a different tinge. As its 1995 Mission Statement indicates, the federal NDP identifies the labor movement as its "partner" and social movements as its "allies." Following a number of years of rocky relations, an internal review by the Canadian Labor Congress (CLC) led it in 1995 explicitly to reaffirm its status as a "founding partner" of the NDP. Nonetheless, neither the New Democrats nor the unions treat the NDP as a party of labor.

Nor does the CLC confine its political action to working with the NDP. Since the mobilizations against the Free Trade Agreement in the mid-1980s, against the Goods and Services Tax in the late 1980s, and for child care and other social programs, the CLC has frequently worked in coalition with the rest of the popular sector. (In Canadian political discourse "popular sector" refers to an array of issue-oriented groups and social movements, including labor, anti-poverty organizations, churches, feminists, nationalists, environmentalists, and so on.) The guiding notion is that both the economy and politics are run by elites dedicated to undermining Canada's traditions of social justice and its economic sovereignty in the name of market values.

One result of coalitional politics across the popular sector was Audrey McLaughlin's victory at the 1989 NDP leadership convention. She had the support of labor leaders less because she rejected corporate-driven economic trends and wanted to preserve the social safety net than because as a feminist social worker from the Yukon she represented positions on reproductive choice, racial equality, gay rights, and Aboriginal claims that union leaders considered essential for successful coalition building. This new-style progressive populism up-

dates Us-against-Themism. But electoral pay-offs have not always been forthcoming. Usually carefully nonpartisan, social movements (with the exception of labor) and issue-oriented groups rarely endorse any party.

McLaughlin's short term as leader was strewn with problems relating to the popular sector. In the 1993 election, when the Liberals promised to roll back the hated neoconservative agenda of the Mulroney government, many popular-sector activists, seeking to maximize the probability of political change voted Liberal. At the same time, popular-sector anger, particularly from the labor movement, at Bob Rae's Ontario New Democratic government cut deeply into the federal NDP's base.² McLaughlin's 1992 "defection" to the side of the "elites" in support of the Charlottetown Accord dismayed many coalition partners. Instead of smoothing over division, as populism was designed to do, efforts to represent all of the broad left provoked electoral problems and debate about the NDP's identity.

Renewal or More of the Same?

Despite the 1993 loss and the subsequent debates, the 1995 convention, presented as an act of reunion, basically voted to stay the course. Facing potential division, Alexa McDonough was chosen as the compromise candidate to lead the party into the next century. She is also a feminist social worker from a provincial party (Nova Scotia) that has never been an NDP stronghold. In 1997 she too ran a campaign focused on social issues, equality, democracy, and community—as well as on the effects of Liberal unemployment insurance reforms. This time, at least in Atlantic Canada, angry voters sent an eight-person NDP contingent to Ottawa that is a miniature replica of the party—four MPs in union politics and four in human rights and community activism.

The 1997 success at steering through the shoals of populism may be short lived. The strategy of uniting protest voters in the Atlantic provinces exploits what may only be a temporary backlash against the Liberals. More threatening for the New Democrats is the fact that in the 1997 election the Reform Party, with its virulent right-wing populism, scooped up the protest vote everywhere else.

The strategic thinking that generated countless populism is still deeply entrenched in the NDP. The stance is now both a response to the divisions inherent in a pluralist party and a result of playing on the terrain of the popular sector, which has its own populist template for interpreting globalization. It is therefore likely that the federal NDP will enter the next century with its left-wing populism intact. It will continue to speak for myriad Canadians who are being squeezed by the downsizing "They" (the corporations) are pushing. It will speak for many Canadians who fear that universal access to high-quality health care is crumbling in the face of "Their" (right-wing governments') cutbacks and privatizations. And, it will continue to call for equity for minorities of all kinds who live in a society in which "They" often means able-bodied, heterosexual, white nonimmigrants. But if this populism of the left provides a necessary voice for justice and democracy in these hard times of cutbacks and renewed intolerance, it lacks, like all populism, a clear set of philosophical principles around which to organize choices among "Our" own competing interests. The NDP still faces the challenge of renewal. ●

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1. The Meech Lake Accord, agreed to by the ten provincial premiers and Prime Minister Mulroney in 1987, would have inserted a recognition of Quebec as a "distinct society" into the Constitution. The accord died in 1990, after much political dispute. The more ambitious Charlottetown Accord was devised out of almost a year of consultation and negotiation. In this round of constitutional politics, many more items were brought into negotiation. There was language to recognize Aboriginal peoples' inherent right to self-government, the decentralization of powers to the provinces, and another version of

the "distinct society" recognition of Quebec. The referendum on the Charlottetown in October 1992 brought overwhelming rejection. The campaign against the accord was led by the right-wing populist Reform Party and several social movements.

2. Elected in 1990 amid high hopes among social movements and labor, Bob Rae's government was deeply disappointing to many supporters. In particular, imposition of a "social contract" on public-sector workers, which suspended their collective agreements and unilaterally imposed wage cutbacks, provoked immense anger.



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The HMO Revolution

How It Happened, What It Means

Rashi Fein

SHORTLY BEFORE writing this essay I received a questionnaire from the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee. It asked that I choose between the Democratic and Republican positions on nine "critical" issues: crime, the balanced budget, environmental protection, campaign-finance reform, education, religious freedom, reproductive choice, tax policy, and national defense.

The number of Americans with inadequate health insurance is growing, the Medicare-reform debate has barely begun, a revolution in the delivery of health care is under way. Nevertheless, the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee does not consider any of these as critical issues.

Surely the committee is aware that millions of Americans have restricted access to health care and are worried about the rapidly expanding managed-care environment. Its silence, therefore, probably stems from a desire not to remind us (can we forget?) that the president's efforts on behalf of universal health care, a centerpiece of his first term, came to nothing. And today, though they are united on incremental reforms such as increased access for children, Democratic members of Congress do not share an overarching position on health-care delivery, financing, or the ways to achieve universal access.

It is more than troubling that we are not engaged in a national debate on the organization and financing of health care. Consider what has happened. In the last decade our health-delivery system has changed markedly from fee-for-service to capitation, from independent practitioners to managed-care organizations, from a sector characterized in larg-

est measure by not-for-profit entities (except for pharmaceuticals and clinical laboratories), to a sector in which for-profit providers and institutions are steadily expanding their share of the market. Consider that the vocabulary used to discuss health care and public policy is increasingly the language of the marketplace: market shares, rates of return, mergers and acquisitions, stock options, and (presumably beneficial) competition. How did it happen that the mergers of community and teaching hospitals are covered on the business pages rather than in the local news section? Surely, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find another social sector directly touching all Americans that has undergone as rapid and remarkable a transformation—and, curiously, a transformation in which the chief protagonists (that is, patients and physicians) are dissatisfied. How could, how did this happen?

Almost fifty years ago, Harry Truman, defeated in his efforts to enact national health insurance (NHI), set up the President's Commission on the Health Needs of the Nation in order to leave a legacy of reform proposals for the organization and financing of health care. Truman was not the first national leader to support NHI or to sponsor a commission on medical care. It is instructive to examine the reports rendered by such commissions and ask the question, "What did they know and when did they know it?" The answer, as with Watergate and Irangate, is "a lot and very early." Many of the solutions we seek to today's health care problems were available decades ago.

America's health-care system did not take the shape it did because of gaps in knowledge and understanding. There has not been a "shortage" of health-care research, but of political strength and will. If research is needed, it is research on how to overcome skepticism,

cynicism, even antipathy, toward government, its programs, and personnel; how to articulate an effective interventionist and redistributive agenda; how to organize support for candidates who favor progressive measures; how to negate the advantages of dollars mobilized against such candidates and measures—put simply, how to move a nation.

Health-care systems, after all, are social constructs that reflect the societies in which they are embedded. To understand today's American health-care system, one must understand its historical development, the way it grew and the soil it grew in, the social, economic, and political forces at play, the experiences, traditions, and attitudes of the population. My examination of health-care problems and possible solutions will necessarily refer to American character and values.

IN PART I of this essay I discuss the current system of medical care, focusing on the changes in familiar and long-standing delivery patterns and relationships, the growth of Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) and managed care, and the problems thus engendered. I ask what catalyzed these changes and why they continue in the face of disquietude among key participants: insurance subscribers, patients, physicians, and other providers. In Part II [forthcoming in *Dissent*, Summer 1998], I shall briefly raise other troubling health-care issues, but will argue that our health system is still evolving. Our current condition will change and the trend line that now prompts pessimism can be altered. I will discuss some of the characteristics of a healthier health system and ask what would be required to create it. My account will be a highly personal one, and so I begin with a brief attempt at full disclosure.

I entered the field of health economics almost five decades ago when medical care could do much less for patients and, not unrelatedly, was far less costly. There were fewer physicians, nurses, hospital beds, and resources of every kind; medical-care expenditures were a much smaller percentage of the Gross Domestic Product.

It is within my professional lifetime that medicine entered its "Golden Age": more phy-

sicians, more specialization, more equipment, more technology, more science, more pharmaceuticals, more therapeutic interventions (many of them remarkably beneficial), increased life expectancy (at all ages), and more and more dollars. Fifty years ago we spent less than 5 percent of our Gross National Product (GNP) on medical care; today we allocate a much larger slice (14 percent) of a much larger pie.

The last thirty years of my life as an economist have been spent at Harvard Medical School. During those years I came to be impressed with the technical aspects of medicine and the contributions they can make to a better life. Nevertheless, my attitudes about the importance of health-care as a social good and as a "right" rather than a privilege were formed long before I joined a medical faculty. They derived from views about the nature of a just society and a belief in the possibilities of government intervention to overcome the failures of market capitalism and to deal with problems engendered by the maldistribution of income. Whatever my skepticism about particular administrations, concerns about the arbitrary use of government power, and anger at government's sins of omission and commission, I continue to believe that an activist government, committed to redistribution, is necessary if we are to achieve greater equity, and not only in health-care, for all Americans.

PREPAID GROUP PRACTICE. In 1961, when I took leave from the University of North Carolina and moved to Washington to serve on the staff of President Kennedy's Council of Economic Advisers, my family and I joined Group Health Association (GHA), a prepaid group practice (PPG). In 1943, Group Health had been the focus of a unanimous Supreme Court decision that held that the American Medical Association (AMA) had imposed illegal restraints on physicians affiliated with Group Health by depriving them of hospital facilities and essential professional contacts. That decision did not alter AMA attitudes toward prepaid group practice, but it did affect behavior. It enabled Group Health, the only PPG in Washington and one of the few in the nation, to survive. Yet, to survive did not mean to flourish. To-

day, Washington abounds with capitated health plans of all kinds; today, employers force employees into managed-care constructs. It was very different in 1961.

Our family chose to enroll in Group Health because we felt that a prepaid group practice could deliver higher quality medical care more conveniently with primary care and specialty practitioners as well as laboratories and medical records all located in one institutional setting. We were reassured that GHA accepted responsibility for the actions of its associated personnel and, thus, put its "seal of approval" on the skills and knowledge of its physicians. This, we felt, would guarantee higher quality than the alternative: selecting a physician out of the yellow pages or through referrals by friends who were as unable as we were to judge "quality." The principles of capitation, under which a monthly premium paid for all necessary care, were appealing. Finally, we were aware that Group Health Association had been formed by individuals (both lay and medical) who viewed it as a kind of nonprofit cooperative, as an expression of a value system, not simply as a provider of care.

The economist in me understood that fee-for-service medicine could lead to unnecessary utilization of health services, since it was in the physician's economic interest to provide more, rather than less, care. Nevertheless, I also was aware of the potential symmetrical negative impact of a fixed capitation payment—that is, why deliver the services if the subscriber has already paid the premium? I was reassured by medical ethics and the medical ethos: while fee-for-service physicians might do "too much," presumably no physician would do "too little." I was also reassured by peer-review relationships; practicing together, physicians could monitor each other's performance. And PPGs also had a monetary incentive to deliver preventive care and keep subscribers healthy rather than treating them only when they became ill. I believed these factors would protect me from underservicing.

Looking back, three things stand out: (1) how little well-educated individuals who had never encountered a prepaid group practice understood about its characteristics; (2) how few of our friends belonged to Group Health,

incorrectly viewing it as akin to "clinic" medicine; (3) how small were the differences in my monthly deductions for the available health plans, given the small premiums and the large employer contributions.

That prepaid group practice organizations were not found throughout America was brought home to me in 1968 when I moved to Harvard and learned that the only available health plan provided Blue Cross-Blue Shield (BC-BS) indemnity coverage. I protested and wrote the dean: "I should have hoped that [Harvard] would not discriminate against any prepaid group practice plans. Perhaps there are none in the Boston area and the issue is academic. . . . Being prepaid group practice oriented, I cannot help but raise this matter."

Even as I complained, the school's leaders, who believed in the concept of prepaid group practice, were working to establish the first PPG in Massachusetts, the Harvard Community Health Plan (HCHP). Facing opposition from many practicing physicians as well as business community ignorance and apathy, HCHP almost fell into bankruptcy. The plan had to be marketed, first to employers and then to their employees, a task made more difficult because staff physicians were averse even to HCHP informational advertising that simply made known its availability, lest their colleagues accuse them of "unethical" behavior. Today, twenty-five years later, the plan has well over a million subscribers.

HEALTH MAINTENANCE ORGANIZATIONS. In part the change is due to an altered external environment. In the early seventies, the ideological barriers against PPGs began to crumble. Conservative Californians in the Nixon administration were acquainted with Kaiser (a large and well-respected PPG on the West Coast) and the nature and quality of its delivery system. They supported the enactment of federal Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) legislation, designed to stimulate the development of capitated insurance/delivery organizations (including, but not limited to, PPGs). Because such plans guaranteed the delivery of all "necessary" care in return for a prepaid premium, providers faced predetermined health-care budgets and assumed financial risks. It

was hoped that the resulting change in the incentive to provide ever more services would slow down the growth of health expenditures. The HMO act provided loan funds to emerging HMOs, developed standards for federal HMO approval, and required "dual choice"; that is, that employers offer employees a federally approved HMO option if one existed in the area. In the early seventies this legislation was designed to "make the world safe for HMOs."

Today, three decades after my letter of complaint, Harvard no longer even includes a traditional indemnity policy as an insurance option. My choice is from among four HMO plans, each offering two programs that differ on the level of reimbursement for care outside the plan's physician and hospital network. A different level of payroll deduction is required for each of the eight choices. These differences reflect the fact that regardless of the plan's total cost, the university contributes the same fixed dollar amount (calculated as a percentage of the premium of the *lowest-cost* plan) toward whatever coverage the employee selects.

Although no longer able to enroll in traditional indemnity insurance, I am aware that most Americans have far fewer options: 50 percent of employees enrolled in HMOs have no choice (that is, their employer offers only one HMO), and 25 percent can choose from among only two plans. I am often asked, "What can I do about it?" by individuals whose employer has selected a plan that does not include the physician who has been treating them and in whom they have confidence. The answer, "You can still go to your physician. If insurance won't cover it, simply pay out of pocket," is truthful, but hardly helpful. The truthful and helpful answer, "Organize," regrettably, works only in the longer run.

THE ROLE OF EMPLOYERS. The Harvard story reflects general developments in American health-care. In the 1940s and 1950s America made a fateful decision: as the result of changes in collective-bargaining patterns, National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) regulations, and the federal tax code, access to health insurance became linked to employment. The story unfolded

in predictable fashion: health insurance, purchased with tax-free dollars, was a good buy (and the more so the higher one's tax bracket). Voluntary health insurance spread, and an increasing percentage of Americans were insured with contributions from employers. In the absence of a national social insurance program providing health coverage, this seemed beneficial.

True, not all Americans benefited: many were unemployed or not in the labor force, many worked for employers who did not provide health insurance, many would lose insurance coverage (especially for "preexisting conditions") if they changed employers and so faced "job-lock." Nevertheless, the enactment of Medicare and Medicaid in 1965, and the 1972 amendments extending Medicare to the disabled, suggested that over time vulnerable groups who fell outside the employment-linked insurance system would be protected through continuing incremental reforms. Since even the national health-insurance proposals sponsored by Presidents Nixon, Carter, and Clinton covered most Americans through their employment, the existing voluntary employer-based system appeared to be strong, effective, and stable.

THAT DID not turn out to be the case. Important incremental reforms were not enacted. Indeed, in the 1980s, rising health-care costs gave employers an incentive to cut back on insurance. Declining union membership and the weakening strength of labor made it possible to do so. Consequently, many employers reduced their percentage contribution to insurance, ceased covering dependents, and limited employee choice to a single inexpensive health plan.

As the number of HMOs grew, employers discovered that just as they negotiated the price of steel, paper, or other "inputs" (including labor), they could negotiate prices for health insurance. This became advantageous when, as a result of the ability of HMOs and capitated plans to control physician behavior, restrict expensive hospital utilization, and limit patient choice of providers, competing managed-care delivery/insurance organizations were often able to offer employers premiums

substantially lower than those available from traditional indemnity plans.

At first, employers included these newer and less expensive plans as additional options for their employees, while continuing to pay the same fixed *percentage* (sometimes as high as 100 percent) of the costs of the plan the employee selected. But employers quickly realized that they gained only when employees selected less expensive plans, and that the larger the employer contribution, the weaker was the economic incentive (or pressure) for employees to do that. This led employers to a more "sophisticated" approach under which they contributed a fixed *dollar* amount (often, as at Harvard, based on the costs of the least expensive option) to whichever plan the employee chose.

Because premium contributions no longer were dependent on employee choice, employer expenditures were predictable and minimized. Employers argued that the new market system would lower total health-care costs by providing incentives for "responsible" behavior at the point where enrollment decisions were made. In addition the theory held that employees who paid a greater portion of the insurance cost would be more cost conscious and would reduce their (presumably profligate) utilization of medical care, thus further lowering premiums. Employers argued that the new system was not only socially responsible, but more equitable because all employees would receive the same dollar assistance. This contrasted with earlier programs in which employees who selected more expensive plans (often higher-income employees) received more dollar assistance.

The new definition of equity is based on the proposition that existing income inequalities are irrelevant in determining equitable distribution. Given a level of basic assistance, inequities presumably do not arise so long as consumption disparities are based on what one does with one's own dollars. It is not unlike the definition in the ill-fated Clinton insurance plan, where individuals could enroll in one of three generic plans (indemnity with maximum choice, managed care with opportunity to step outside the system, and more restricted managed care), at different cost to the subscriber.

In Milton Friedman's phrase, we would be "free to choose," although, clearly, lower-income individuals and families would be restricted in their freedom (ability) to choose the more expensive programs.

A version of this equity definition appeared in an October 19, 1997 *New York Times* article dealing with luxury hospital rooms and titled "Life Styles of the Rich and Ailing." A St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Center representative argued that people should be allowed to buy whatever they might want with their own dollars and stated, "If you want to question the whole underpinnings of capitalist society, it was an argument that seems to have been settled some time ago. This [the expensive hospital room] is not exclusionary. You don't need a letter of reference or an Ivy League degree." St. Luke's-Roosevelt is not unique: Mount Sinai Hospital's Room 106, 11 West, is available to those willing and able to make a "non-exclusionary" payment of \$1,000 a day beyond insurance reimbursement. So equity is at war with equality!

New patterns of employer assistance for the purchase of insurance and continuing increases in the cost of the old indemnity plans as healthier, younger subscribers shifted to HMOs, assured the growth of managed-care enrollment. Nevertheless, one might have anticipated physician resistance to developments that constrained their clinical independence and reduced their incomes. Potential opposition was muted by two factors: the large and growing oversupply of physicians and their longstanding view of government as the enemy. The first factor meant that physicians no longer could assume that traditional solo practice would be economically rewarding; a secure job, even if in an HMO, had a certain appeal. The second factor meant that physicians, busy focusing on government, failed to realize they were about to lose their independence to corporate interests.

I recall meeting with clinicians at one of America's premier teaching hospitals. I reminded them that they knew where Albany, N.Y., and Washington, D.C., were located, when the legislatures were in session, who headed the relevant committees. I noted that they had been effective in dealing with gov-

ernment and could be even more effective if they welded an alliance with their patients and potential patients (a not entirely welcome suggestion!). Conversely, they did not know where or when the Federated Department Stores, GM, or CBS boards met, let alone how to "lobby" such boards. My comments were treated with a certain skepticism: government remained the "enemy." The concept of corporate control was foreign.

New health-care insurance/delivery organizations reduced employer health-insurance costs and fit with American ideology about efficiency and free-market competition. Politically, the happy circumstance was that in HMOs conservatives saw the future and competitive markets, liberals saw the past and cooperative ventures, and ubiquitous economists saw the present and a more rational, incentive-driven world. So America embarked on a radical restructuring of its health-care delivery system. Economic opportunities attracted entrepreneurs and Wall Street dollars, resulting in the growth of for-profit medicine.

The story has a dynamic quality. As more and more individuals are pushed into HMOs, more and more physicians discover that is where their patients are. They therefore sign up with every managed-care organization that will have them. Even if, later, they become dissatisfied with the clinical controls exerted by the HMO, they dare not leave: leaving means losing one's patient base. Consequently, continued HMO expansion does not imply that subscribers or physicians are pleased with these new arrangements. Nevertheless, analysts, drawing the fallacious conclusion that the various parties to the drama of growth are exercising their free and unfettered choice, infer that those who enroll in and those who provide managed care must prefer such arrangements. They accept growth as evidence of satisfaction (almost as if the growth in the number of hungry and homeless persons is evidence of what "they" prefer).

In the real world, decisions about health-insurance options for employees are made by corporate financial officers. Government officials make similar decisions for Medicaid, though not yet for Medicare, recipients. Con-

sequently, trade-offs between cost and quality, and freedom and restriction, are heavily influenced by the desire to minimize private costs and contain government expenditures. Furthermore, corporate and government decision makers believe that HMOs and managed-care entities can and will deliver efficient care that reduces expenditures without affecting the quality of medical intervention or the number of interventions of value.

Unlike my 1961 belief in prepaid group practice as a way of enhancing quality and strengthening the cooperative community, today's arguments for HMOs revolve around the economic opportunity to purchase the same health-care product at a lower price. Thus far the record indicates that cost pressures did moderate and that evidence of quality deterioration is anecdotal. Nevertheless, there are important reasons for concern. These go beyond the fact that recent premium increases for HMO coverage suggest that we have returned to the familiar pattern of escalating expenditures. Perhaps price moderation is a one-time savings: there is little one can do as an encore once hospitalization rates and the length of physician visits have been reduced to minimum levels.

FOR-PROFIT MEDICINE. One important reason for concern about the cost-quality trade-off relates to the growth of for-profit HMOs, now accounting for 75 percent of all HMOs and enrolling over 50 percent of all subscribers. It should come as no surprise that the objective of for-profit medicine is to make a profit. Their CEOs know that the ability to pay dividends and to raise capital for expansion (as well as the value of their own stock and stock options) depends upon the HMO's economic performance. Since that performance is influenced by costs, HMO physicians face both subtle and overt pressures (and may be offered economic rewards) to limit orders for tests, drug prescriptions, specialist referrals, and hospital utilization.

I have met physicians who recognize those pressures and incentives and hope they are not succumbing to them, who spend their evenings reviewing the day's cases because of a nagging concern that they may have shaded

their clinical decisions "unduly" in the direction of under-treatment. Medicine, after all, is not only a science, but an art. Illness falls on a continuum; answers are not clear-cut but matters of judgment. They fear (as should we) that critical decisions may be heavily influenced by the HMO balance sheets.

These problems are not limited to the for-profit sector. The presence of for-profit medicine has a dynamic that deeply affects not-for-profits. This is most obvious when not-for-profits convert into for-profits in order to raise funds for capital expansion. But not-for-profits also find it difficult to maintain quality while competing with plans that offer lower premiums by cutting corners. After all, it is much easier for both employers and employees to register differences in premiums than to assess differences in quality.

IMPORTANTLY, competition also exerts pressures on not-for-profits to behave like for-profit providers who recognize that the way to flourish is to avoid patients who need a lot of care. Costs are reduced by enrolling healthy patients and inducing sicker ones to disenroll by not responding to their needs. Physicians willing to treat particular patients whom they believe they can help often find themselves at odds with other physicians in their group and with its business managers. Indeed, under arrangements found in many managed-care organizations, the primary-care physician, "at risk" for the extra tests, consultations, and treatments, is not unhappy when he can disengage from a "challenging" patient.

Because of these interactions, several not-for-profit HMOs have called for federal standards and regulations that would apply to all HMOs, thus enabling them to compete with for-profits while retaining (what they see as) their community ethos. They fear that, absent such legislation, not-for-profits will be forced to choose between participating in a race to the bottom or going under.

The dynamic that I describe has not yet played out. The data and analyses are incomplete. We are forced to rely on theory and on our understanding of the forces at play rather than on evidence. This should come as no surprise: it is difficult to assess, let alone mea-

sure, a revolution in progress; it is impossible to analyze long- and intermediate-run impacts in the very short run. Furthermore, our attempts to measure are confounded by the sharp differences in the performance of individual HMOs ("when you've seen one HMO, you've seen one HMO"), in state regulatory efforts, and in levels of managed-care enrollment. Yet we know there is reason to worry: as health-care costs increase (if only because of advances in medicine and an aging population) and employers insist on holding premiums steady or severely limiting their growth, the length of patient visits will decline, time between visits will increase, there will be more interference with clinical decisions, and quality of care will suffer.

It would be incorrect to assume that the principles embodied in capitation are faulty. Those who have long decried "piece work" should recognize the deficiencies of the fee-for-service model. It is wasteful and, since all societies have limited resources that make it impossible for the private and public sectors to do everything that is worth doing, such waste is hurtful. Nevertheless, we must not substitute waste in the form of administrative expenses (already higher than in other nations and growing rapidly), as well as high executive salaries and profits, for earlier wasteful overutilization of services. Surely we need not tolerate a situation in which, in 1994, for-profit HMOs such as Well Point and United Health Care used less than 80 percent of their premium dollars for medical care (while Kaiser could allocate over 96 percent to care and operate successfully).

HMOs and managed care do have positive attributes. Those of us who over the years called for more preventive care and for more reliance on clinical evidence and data recognized the deficiencies of the previous "cottage industry" medical practice. The structure of prepaid group practice, the clinical data it generates, the fact that it serves a defined population, that there is a "denominator," make it possible to measure performance: rates of immunization, prenatal care, mammograms, and so on. This can result in better medicine for more people—especially when HMO physicians and subscribers are self-selected, when

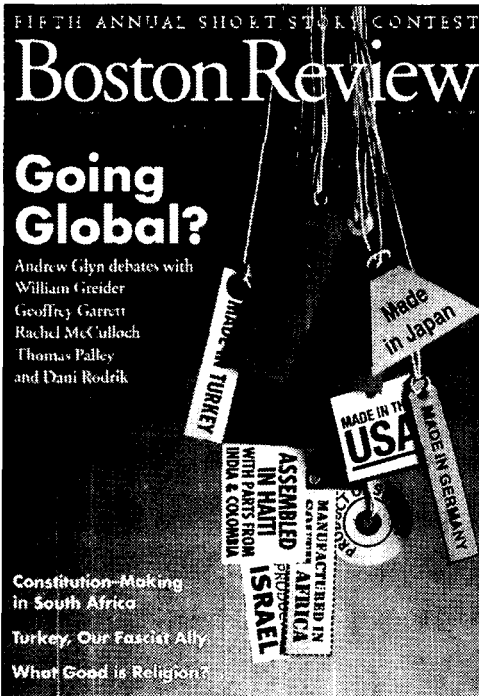
they join the organization because they believe in it and in its goals.

That, however, is not the situation that prevails today. Many of today's problems derive from an ethos in which health-care and policy decisions are driven almost exclusively by competitive cost-cutting and economic considerations—and by the fact that for-profit firms have imposed their behavior patterns on the health-care field. As a consequence, today's HMOs are different constructs than earlier PPGs. Just as ConAgra is not Brooks Farm writ large, Oxford Health Plans is not an amplified version of Michael Shadid's 1929 Farmers' Union Hospital Association medical cooperative in Elk City,

Oklahoma.

Physicians who fear that they will be told what to do and for whom to do it, and that business managers and cost-effectiveness "experts" will control clinical practice, have reason to fear. So, too, do we, their patients. But fear should not lead to paralysis. The future is not predetermined. We can act to alter current trends and future outcomes. In Part II of this essay I will explore what a better health world might look like and what changes would be required in America and American medicine to achieve that better world. ●

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The Price of a Sustainable Environment

Eric T. Freyfogle

IN DECEMBER 1997, the Edwards Aquifer Authority conducted a series of public hearings in five south Texas communities. It wanted to know what people thought about proposed new rules governing withdrawals from the region's large aquifer. Years of excessive pumping had seriously lowered groundwater tables, threatening the viability of farms, urban areas, and federally protected wildlife species. So evident had the problem become that nearly everyone accepted the need both for pumping limits and for a permit system that allocated pumping rights. What wasn't accepted, and what the hearings came to focus on, were the terms of the pumping rights that water users would acquire. Would these rights be tradable commodities, bought and sold in the market? Would a regional market develop in these rights, shifting water flows invisibly to their highest-priced uses? Would the region, in short, buy a ticket on the market train, to journey toward its water-use future?

Pumping permits in the Edwards Aquifer would largely go for irrigation, in recognition of historic water-use practices. The growing demand for water, though, lay in the region's urban areas, particularly San Antonio. As San Antonio saw things, it needed water to keep expanding, and it could only get that water by buying rights from farmers and diverting the water to urban uses. So vital was the issue that the president of the San Antonio Water System appeared at one hearing in person, pleading for rules that transformed groundwater into a marketable commodity.

As proposed, the new rules placed significant limits on how much water farmers could sell and to whom, rules aimed chiefly at pro-

tecting rural economies and keeping out speculators. Agricultural water could be used only on farms, not held for speculation or diverted to golf courses and suburban lawns. A farmer who conserved water by irrigating more efficiently could sell the water saved. But San Antonio couldn't simply enter a farming community, buy its water, and leave the place forever dry.

San Antonio's objections to transfer restrictions were easy enough to understand. So too were the objections of large commercial farmers like the Lone Star Growers, who knew that unrestricted transfer rights meant top dollar in the market. But in the ranks of the objectors were the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) and the Sierra Club. In jointly filed comments, they asked the Aquifer Authority to ease transfer limits so that a true market in water rights could develop. If cities wanted to buy and farmers wanted to sell, argued the environmental groups, the sales should go through. If speculators wanted to make money trading water, stimulating a more active market, that too would be fine.

Water marketing has gained popularity these days as a means of shifting water from low-valued uses like irrigated farming to high-valued uses, including ski resorts (to make snow) and vineyards (to protect against frost). In southeastern Utah, Micron Technology arranged a water-rights swap with the Bureau of Reclamation to gain access to the water it needed (two million gallons per day) to clean and cool its silicon chips. In Nebraska, conservation interests are piecing together an imaginative plan to create a water-rights "bank" to protect Platte River waterfowl.

Many environmental groups support these water transfers, citing the environmental benefits that come from halting new reservoirs and diversion projects. Most active has been the Environmental Defense Fund, a veteran of

water wars in the noisiest battleground, southern California. For decades, California's thirsty coastal cities have turned longing eyes on the massive water flows that invigorate the nearby desert. Recently, EDF helped facilitate a deal by which Los Angeles paid desert irrigators to implement water-conserving measures, with Los Angeles, in exchange, gaining rights to use the water saved. San Diego, desperate for water, wants to do something similar or, failing that, simply to buy up irrigated farmland, transfer the water, and leave the desert to reclaim its own.

Pollution as a Marketable Right

The hoopla surrounding water marketing builds upon a long and venerated American tradition. Colonial Americans began buying and selling nature practically from the first moment they stepped ashore. To do that, they first had to divide nature into pieces, into commodities like acres of land, iron-ore mines, and waterwheel sites. Over the centuries, to be sure, America has had a dissenting tradition, one that has embraced nature as a whole and interpreted it intuitively and spiritually. But the dominant intellectual strand has been decidedly utilitarian and individualistic, particularly in frontier regions: nature conceived as a storehouse of resources, a collection of parts, gaining value mostly through human use.

For generations enthusiasts have touted the market as an efficient mechanism for exploiting America's lands and waters. New today is the claim that markets are equally efficient in promoting far different goals: in reducing pollution and fostering sustainable resource-use practices. Our environmental problems, market advocates claim, arise in large measure because pricing mechanisms are so badly skewed. When polluters are allowed to externalize their harmful wastes, their production costs are artificially lowered and they overproduce. When natural resources are untradable, they get stuck in low-valued uses, often wasteful and damaging uses.

Most annoying, as market advocates see things, is the massive "command-and-control" bureaucracy that has arisen to address environmental messes. Bureaucrats stifle technological ingenuity, raising pollution-control costs

in the process, when they tell companies how to cut back their pollution and by how much. Too often environmental regulations compel polluters to employ particular, expensive technologies, usually end-of-the-pipe technologies, when cheaper reduction methods are available. Regulations also drive up pollution-control costs when they require all polluters to cut back equally, ignoring the differing costs that companies face in reducing pollution. The more efficient approach, proponents say, is to discard regulations like these and unleash the powerful market.

In recent years, free-market environmentalism has gained considerable momentum, and in the movement's brief history no political victory stands taller than the 1990 revision of the Clean Air Act. In the 1990 law, Congress took its most forceful step toward the use of market forces to control industrial pollution. Before that, tradable pollution rights were used only occasionally, in the phase-outs of leaded gasoline and ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbons. The 1990 act gave the technique its most challenging trial run—to bring about low-cost reductions in the emission of sulfur dioxide by coal-burning electric utilities.

Congress dealt with the 110 worst sulfur-emitters in 1990 simply by ordering them to make prescribed reductions as a group. The law gave polluters flexibility in how to go about achieving these reductions, and did not, as had prior laws, mandate the use of particular pollution-control technology. In addition, the law allowed individual polluters to overpollute, so long as they bought rights to do so from other utilities. By giving utilities tradable pollution rights (or "allowances," as the law termed them), the law created an incentive for utilities to reduce pollution more than the required amount. Utilities that did so could either save their unused allowances for later use or sell them for cash.

By all accounts, the sulfur-trading program set up in 1990 has been a big success. Pollution levels have diminished further than targeted reductions. Costs of reduction have fallen far below the predicted costs of new scrubber technology. Flush with this success, market proponents are now pushing for similar trading schemes for other air pollutants,

like nitrogen oxide, a precursor to ground-level ozone formation. Impatient with the pace of federal action, Michigan has sought to establish intrastate trading schemes covering all of the half-dozen pollutants subject to national ambient air-quality standards. On the water-pollution front, several states are experimenting with schemes that allow factories and other "point source" polluters to avoid further pollution cutbacks if they can successfully pay farmers, timber harvesters, or other "nonpoint" polluters to reduce runoff pollution through better land-use practices. Finally, there is the new global-warming treaty, which calls for the creation of tradable pollution rights in carbon dioxide and other climate-changing gases.

So great are the market's virtues, according to ardent free-marketers, that the market can even tell us what level of environmental amenities we really want. Properly functioning water markets can tell us how much water should remain in rivers to support crayfish and river rafters, and how much instead should bathe golf courses and computer chips. Pollution-trading schemes can tell us whether the ill effects of nutrient-laden rivers are more or less tolerable, in dollar-cost terms, than the price tags for new sewage-treatment facilities.

The Market-Makers' Toolbox

The aim of free-market environmentalism is to structure resource-use decision making so that decisions respond, not to bureaucratic mandates, but to the more disciplined signals of the market. To get the market train purring this well—to get the prices right, as the slogan goes—market proponents have assembled a large box of tools. A tax on pollution, a powerful if politically awkward tool, helps get prices right by correcting market distortions that arise when polluters can costlessly push harms on to outsiders. A tax on the use of new raw materials can have a similar effect: it pushes users to take into account the adverse environmental impacts that inevitably arise when minerals are extracted or trees are cut.

Mitigation requirements, another free-market tool, force developers to consider the harms caused by destroying or consuming ecologically valuable lands. A developer who fills a wetland can be told to mitigate the harm by

constructing nearby a similarly sized wetland. Faced with such a requirement, the developer is compelled to account for the ecological damage when deciding whether and where to develop. Less complicated are liability rules, common law and statutory, that require polluters to pay damages to those who are injured. Volume-based garbage-hauling schemes, which require garbage generators to pay by the bag, yield more sensitive price signals and provide incremental incentives to reduce waste. When regulations are needed to deal with things like pollution, the market-oriented approach is simply to set specific pollution maximums, leaving it to polluters themselves to figure out the cheapest way to comply.

But these examples are really marginal to free-market environmental thought. At the center is the tool among tools—the construction of actual markets in resources and environmental amenities, whether in water, pollution emissions, conservation easements, river-raffing rights, scenic views, free-flowing river segments, or migratory bird-nesting spots. Fundamentally, the market is about cutting deals. And when it comes to the environment, proponents say, that's just what we need to be doing. Markets mean efficiency. Efficiency means low cost. Low cost means that we can afford more of what we want—including, if we choose, things like clean rivers, grizzly bears, and mature forests filled with birdsong.

If we would only hop aboard the market train, it would carry us to a healthy land.

Paring the Claims

These claims need to be considered seriously, given that their advertised benefits are so alluring. To make sense out of them, though, we need a tool of our own, a paring knife, to cut away the soft from the sound. Free-market arguments are thick with exaggeration. The market train, in truth, is less new and less powerful than we are told.

The standard story told about environmental degradation portrays the market largely as villain, rewarding polluters for externalizing their costs and providing incentives for clearcutting forests and depleting fisheries. As it turns out, most of the free-marketers' tools are premised, however quietly, on the truth of

this indictment. The tools are used, not to harness the market to achieve something good, but to restrain the market from producing so much bad.

Pollution taxes, raw-materials fees, liability rules, volume-based pricing schemes—these all have the modest aim of getting exploiters of the land to pay for what they damage or consume. That aim, to be sure, is a worthy one, but it leaves exploiters free to degrade as much as they can afford. Other tools in the free-market box involve easing regulatory requirements so that regulated parties can select less costly compliance methods. Compliance flexibility arises when a polluter is given a range of options. All other things equal, laws ought to allow as much flexibility as possible. But in the case of environmental laws, the advent of flexibility has come from a weakening of the original vision. When Congress told the EPA to require specific technologies, the long-term goal was to find the technology that did the best job of protecting the environment. The EPA stumbled at its work, rarely pushing polluters as hard or as far as Congress originally intended. Still the goal was on the books—to do the best job possible. In the era of flexible compliance, that goal has largely disappeared. Flexibility arises precisely because polluters no longer have to shoot so high. Performance goals are more modest, capable of being satisfied with lesser pollution-reduction methods, some more expensive than others.

ONLY A FEW free-market tools really have much to do with using the market to achieve positive environmental gains. Water markets have that good outcome when they keep dams from being built. Pollution-trading rights can have the same good result, at least when pollution-reduction goals are ambitiously set. Even in cases like these, however, it is easy to exaggerate the benefits of markets. Water markets don't automatically lead to rivers that sustain aquatic life. Markets merely divert water to the highest bidder; if top bidders want to drain a river dry, watering lawns and golf courses, the market is quick to comply. In the case of the sulfur-emissions program, the cost-savings had little to do with the trading system itself. Gains came from the

law's flexible compliance element, which allowed utilities to shift to low-sulfur coal rather than install new scrubbers. Deregulated railroads upgraded their services, leading to significant drops in coal-shipping costs and hence in coal prices. For the most part, these savings were obtainable without creating a pollution-rights market.

Having pared things down, we are left with a small but nonetheless valuable core. Resistance to tighter pollution limits largely arises from concerns over cost, and the cheaper we can make pollution reduction, the more of it we are likely to buy. If San Diego is going to get its water, come what may, it's better that the water come from efficiencies in irrigation than from pipelines snaking south from Oregon.

Reasons to Be Wary

Proponents of any policy approach are prone to exaggeration, so it is only a mild rebuke of free-market advocates to point out that they overplay their hands. There are, however, deeper worries about the free-market approach, which have to do with the dangers posed by the free-market tools themselves, by the assumptions that underlie them, and by the messages that they convey.

The dangers are most evident when the case for markets is presented in its strongest form, when we're told that a well-functioning market can supply sufficient incentives for land conservation, including the conservation of endangered species, while remedying pollution and other harmful externalities. These are alluring claims, but they rest atop assumptions that are empirically weak and morally questionable.

THE ASSUMPTION OF FUNGIBLE GOODS. For a market to function, whether in water rights or sulfur emissions, it needs fungible goods to move around from place to place and participant to participant. In the cases of the Edwards Aquifer and electric-utility sulfur emissions, the goods being traded were largely fungible. Groundwater extractions in one place were functionally similar to extractions from elsewhere in the aquifer. Sulfur emissions have impacts that are more widespread than local.

In the case of many environmental problems, however, local conditions and impacts are far more important, so much so that goods are not fungible, and shifts from seller A to buyer B have grave impacts that the market is prone to ignore.

Most water is extracted from rivers, and the impacts of withdrawing and using water vary dramatically from place to place. A small stream is affected more than a large river by the extraction of a given water flow or the addition of a quantity of pollution. How water is used and where it is used significantly affect the amount and timing of the return flow. Long-distance pumping causes problems by removing water from its home watershed, to the damage, sometimes great, of resident aquatic and human life.

The problems with pollution trading are clearly revealed in a Communities for a Better Environment (CBE) suit in Los Angeles, challenging a market-based pollution measure implemented by the South Coast Air Quality Management District. CBE expressed concern about the emission of air pollution—volatile organic compounds—in neighborhoods around marine fuel-transfer terminals. Each unloading oil tanker emitted six tons of dangerous vapors—easily controlled by installing vapor-recovery systems. Air-quality managers, however, allowed fuel companies to forgo installing recovery systems if the companies instead purchased old, high-polluting cars and scrapped them. This improved air quality regionally and at lower cost, but it allowed air-pollution “hotspots” around fuel terminals, to the disadvantage of nearby low-income communities.

THE ASSUMPTION OF ACCURATE VALUATION. Markets of all types are notorious for their ruthless assignments of value. But free-market environmentalism depends upon the market's ability to value the natural world in the right way. How can it do this when so much of nature has little or no use value? Species that cannot be put to direct human use are thoughtlessly pushed aside, however important they may be in sustaining ecosystems and providing a pleasing, diverse landscape. Ecological communities like mature forests do have market value, and the

market does supply an incentive to keep them productive. But forests are valuable mostly for their trees, and efforts to enhance a forest's timber value can degrade its roles in protecting watersheds, cleaning air, and harboring wildlife.

TAKING CARE OF OUR OWN. Related to problems of market valuation is the questionable free-market claim that owners of land are prompted by market forces to take care of what they own. When resources are unowned and anyone can use them, overuse often follows—hence the “tragedy” of the commons. The solution, free-market advocates assert, is to divide the commons into private shares with an owner to care for each. Similarly, environmental problems would end if we simply divided all of nature into privately owned shares, tradable on the market and securely protected by law.

Secure private rights do indeed provide an incentive to care, compared with schemes where private rights are totally lacking or are so insecure that owners exploit resources quickly for fear of losing the chance. But the discipline of the market is by no means so strong that it ensures resource-use practices that sustain the health of the land. Timber companies often clear-cut land with little regard for overall ecological impacts. Sloping lands are harvested with little concern for soil erosion and soil degradation, largely because the ill effects of soil loss are so delayed that managers today can ignore them.

The empirical truth is that private owners, responding only to the market and their own desires, do not always take care of what they own. Long-term land health requires a concern about the land that extends beyond any single lifetime. It requires a discount rate for future harm much lower than the rates used by businesses and financial planners. It requires, in short, a view of the land that is moral and aesthetic, as well as economic.

THE MARKET'S POWER TO CLEANSE. Implicit in the free-market emphasis on accurate pricing is the assertion that those who pay full value for a thing have adequately fulfilled their environmental duties, morally and legally. Someone who buys a can of tuna has no moral connec-

tion to the catching and processing of the tuna. If he also pays full price for garbage collection, he need not worry about the empty can once the garbage truck pulls away. The market "cleanses" all transactions. If tuna is caught in a way that kills dolphins, the consumer is not to blame. If the can is thrown into a leaky landfill, it is the landfill owner's fault, not the tuna eater's.

But market morality is not so simple. To buy a product is inevitably to become tied to its past and its future. Civilized nations for generations have objected to the production of goods using slave labor, and have viewed such goods as tainted in a way that the market cannot cleanse. Similar objections have arisen recently concerning shoes and clothes made by children in unsafe factories. For centuries Anglo-American law has imposed liability even on the unknowing possessor of stolen goods.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY needs to connect people, particularly prosperous people, with their ecological "footprints," making them aware of the harms inflicted to supply their abundant goods and whisk away their wastes. So long as buyers are disconnected, they will reward sellers who keep prices down by way of environmentally damaging shortcuts.

EFFICIENCY AGAINST THE DELIBERATIVE PROCESS. An efficient market is one that supplies us with whatever goods we want at lowest cost, leaving us free to choose those goods—a land abounding in biological diversity, say, or chemically bathed bluegrass lawns. But what we choose as consumers is often quite different from what we might choose as citizens and community members. As consumers, interacting with one another through the market, we will probably decide to carve a regional wilderness into individual parcels for cabins and home sites. If we instead came together as citizens, taking the time to consider the wilderness and how we might best use it, to reflect on the claims of future generations and other species, we might well decide to protect it as a nature preserve, using it for recreation but keeping roads few and cabins far away.

Efficiency, the market's most exalted prom-

ise, is a desirable quality of the means we use to achieve an end. If we want to protect other species, we need the most efficient means. But efficiency, standing alone or embedded in a market, cannot tell us whether species are worth saving. That decision requires a moral judgment. Good judgments come out of processes that are informed, deliberative, and morally challenging, that bring people together to reflect upon the common good and the long term. Markets make no such demands on people; they are free to act in haste and to think only of themselves.

In practice, market mechanisms compete directly with other methods of communal decision making, particularly those in which citizens make collective plans for their shared landscapes. To create and promote regional (or even national) water markets is to diminish the power of local communities to make decisions about local waterways. To allow polluters to sell pollution rights, free of local restrictions, is similarly to sap the power of local communities to make decisions about the kind of air quality they want.

THE MARKET'S UNHELPFUL MESSAGES. Not the least of the problems presented by markets are the many messages that they convey about the natural world, about how we ought to live in that world, and about how we relate to one another. Nature is portrayed as a collection of resources, as parts and pieces available to buy and sell. Nature as a whole has no value because the market cannot deal with it as a whole. So we overlook the ties that hold the pieces together, the known as well as the unknown connections. To own a piece of land is not, as the market suggests, to own something discrete; it is to own a piece of something larger, and to become involved in and responsible for the plight of that larger thing.

A related market message, equally troubling, is the legitimacy that it grants to self-centered behavior. However effective economic incentives might be, they do not push people to look beyond their own self-interest, and land health will never come about so long as we each look out only for ourselves. Environmental degradation is in part the product of bad values, heightened by ecological igno-

rance. As a short-term tactic, environmental policy can take advantage of individual greed. In the long term, it needs to press us toward a more generous embrace of the natural order.

Perhaps the most troubling message of the market arises from its very ability to give us so many things. From comfortable cars to supersonic jets to bone-rattling home theaters, the market's accomplishments are impressive. A market that can do these things, we're prone to assume, is a market that can provide us with everything. But the truth, in this setting and others, is much to the contrary. The market has never given us a healthy land in which to live, and it is not on the verge of doing so today. To achieve a goal like that requires far greater engagement by us, individually and collectively. We can use the market to help us, but we also need to work in very different ways.

Riding the Market Train

In his short story "The Celestial Rail-road," Nathaniel Hawthorne challenged the technological optimism of his day by retelling John Bunyan's classic tale, *Pilgrim's Progress*. Hawthorne's pilgrim Christian, shifted from Puritan England to America of the Industrial Revolution, chose to forgo his predecessor's arduous footpath toward the Celestial City, instead traveling in comfort by train. With technology carrying him onward and Mr. Smooth-it-away as his companion, the industrial-age pilgrim quickly bypassed the moral trials and pitfalls that so troubled his pedestrian ancestor. Technology, it seemed, had obviated the need for him to steel his heart and contain his pride, just as it had softened the rigors of winter and the toils of long-distance travel.

Hawthorne's tale ends, predictably, with the train falling short of the Celestial City. The pilgrim must retrace his route and undergo the same moral challenges as his pre-

decessor. Industrial technology, it turns out, provides only a facade of moral progress, however useful it is in satisfying more mundane needs.

The technological optimism of the nineteenth century finds its modern counterpart in the market enthusiasm of the late twentieth century. The market as much as the railroad is a useful tool, but discipline is needed to use it well. It does not obviate the need to reshape our values and visions, individually and collectively. Like the railroad, the market is no panacea.

In the end, market-based tools must fit into a larger scheme of environmental policy that has as its principal aim not the promotion of markets, but the achievement and maintenance of a healthy land. Out of our deliberations on environmental goals should come new understandings of what it means to be a good citizen. Owning land must come to entail belonging to a natural community, with obligations to respect the integrity and fertility of that community. Rights to use water must be understood as a form of stewardship, constrained by duties to use water in beneficial ways. The possession of a pollution permit does not mean that pollution is a good activity; such permits, however useful and legally protected, must never give rise to anything like a right to pollute.

Progress on environmental issues, then, will depend on our continued use of moral language and our continued reliance on deliberative processes to set overall goals. To make good use of the market train, we need conductors with courage and moral depth. More than that, we need passengers, lots of them, who are ecologically alert and morally engaged. ●

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Battle for Breath

Industry Lobbyists, Government Watchdogs, and the Silicosis Crisis

David Rosner and Gerald Markowitz

IN 1935 IT was discovered that roughly seven hundred workers had died after drilling tunnels for the Union Carbide corporation at Gauley Bridge, West Virginia. Congressional investigations revealed that hundreds of these workers had been buried outside the tunnels, in unmarked roadside graves, by the very company that was killing them. What destroyed these workers was silicosis—a devastating lung disease that results from the inhalation of silica particles. Silicosis patients suffer from chronic coughs and severe shortness of breath, and are vulnerable to respiratory infections of all kinds. The disease is irreversible.

In the years after the Gauley Bridge revelations, silicosis was considered “the king of occupational diseases.” Thousands of silicosis lawsuits were filed against foundries, metal mines, potteries, and construction companies. These industries responded by convincing state governments to incorporate silicosis into workers’-compensation schedules, thus taking the disease out of the courts. By the late 1940s, following the introduction of filters and ventilators for workers, business leaders declared silicosis a disease of the past, whose current victims were a legacy of the unhygienic and primitive work conditions of a bygone era.

But silicosis never really went away. Beginning in the late 1960s, it became clear that thousands of workers—especially in the oil industries of the Gulf Coast—were losing their lives prematurely because of silica exposure. The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the Occupational

Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) took a keen interest in silicosis almost from the moment of their creation in 1970. During the ensuing twenty-eight years, however, tens of thousands of workers continued and continue to be overexposed—even as the scientific evidence of silica’s dangers has mounted. The tardiness of change is a tribute to the cleverness, determination, and audacity of industry representatives, who have worked for nearly three decades to preserve the status quo.

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John Farmer,* an African-American sandblaster, was born in 1935 in the Gulf Coast town of Orange, Texas. After graduating from high school he spent two years in college, joined the army as an artillery setter, and then worked as a laborer and sandblaster. From 1968 until 1982, when he retired, he worked in a Gulf Coast shipyard. Because of his small size (he was only five feet six inches tall and weighed less than 125 pounds) Farmer was often sent into the holds and double-bottoms of ships, which were poorly ventilated, where he sandblasted off asbestos and other residue. For most of the time at the shipyard, he used a “desert hood,” which protected him from ricocheting particles, a cartridge respirator that partially filtered the silica-laden air, and sometimes an air-fed hood, a cumbersome “space suit” that supplied him with relatively pure air for the short time he was able to wear it in the hot and humid shipyard. In 1988, when he was fifty-three years old, a doctor diagnosed him with “massive progressive fibrosis,” noting that “he was very short of breath while standing up and walking a mere three feet to the examining table.” Three years later, he had deteriorated to the point where he “was no longer able to walk and can only stand briefly while using supplemental oxygen.” After considering

A different version of this article appears in *Public Health Reports*.

*In all the case histories, names and other identifying information have been changed.

him for a lung transplant, the physician noted that this fifty-six-year-old man's future looked "bleak both for his longevity as well as quality of life."

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WHEN NIOSH and OSHA were established by the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, silicosis was just returning to policy makers' radar screens. A few years earlier, sandblasters and painters in Louisiana's Avondale Shipyards had come forward, complaining of constricted breathing and terrible pain. Three researchers at Tulane University then began a series of studies that documented widespread silicosis. These studies seemed tailor-made for the new federal agencies. Among NIOSH's primary tasks was to write reports that would provide scientific guidance for OSHA's regulatory activity. Silicosis was one of the oldest and best-documented occupational diseases, and NIOSH officials hoped that developing the scientific base for an enforceable silica standard would be politically less controversial than establishing standards for newer toxic substances.

In the early 1970s, NIOSH contracted with Austin Blair, an industrial hygienist from Boeing Aerospace Company in Seattle, to survey working conditions in sandblast operations. Blair's report proved to be a damning indictment of silica exposures in general and the protection—or more accurately, the lack of protection—that respirators and protective equipment afforded workers. Blair wrote unequivocally: "Some mention should be made of respirator fit. They don't. They're designed in a single size which, in the opinions of the interviewed blasters, fit no one." He found that "the protection afforded these workmen is, on the whole, marginal to poor."

Blair's indictment of protective equipment was serious enough. But in mid-1974, two other NIOSH-supported projects revealed the prevalence of silicosis among shipyard workers and steel fabricators in New Orleans and elsewhere. One report, by Tulane's Morton Ziskind, argued that the best way to protect workers would be to develop alternatives to sand as an abrasive: "The use of sand substitutes for abrasive purposes is the surest way

of protecting against silicosis."

NIOSH reacted swiftly. In late 1974, the agency recommended a Crystalline Silica Standard in which the Permissible Exposure Limit (PEL) would be cut in half, "so that no worker is exposed to a time-weighted average (TWA) concentration of free silica greater than fifty micrograms per cubic meter of air." The agency further recommended that silica be banned as an abrasive in blasting: "uncontrolled abrasive blasting with silica sand is such a severe silicosis hazard that . . . silica sand, or other materials containing more than 1 percent free silica, should be prohibited as an abrasive substance in abrasive blasting and cleaning operations."

The sandblasting and paint industries quickly shattered NIOSH's hopes that silicosis would be an uncontroversial subject of regulation. Almost immediately after the agency released its recommendations, industry groups launched a massive organizing effort to ensure that OSHA did not adopt the proposed standards. At a meeting of the Industrial Health Foundation in Pittsburgh, business leaders confronted J.P. O'Neill, the chief of OSHA's division of health-standards development. O'Neill argued there that "the prevalence of silicosis has not really dropped at all," and that therefore NIOSH's proposed standards were reasonable and just. Industry representatives in the audience challenged him on three grounds: First, they argued that the medical data about silica and the incidence of silicosis were incomplete. Without better epidemiology, they maintained, lowering the threshold-limit value or banning sand was premature. One audience member asked, "Do we really know that the present standard wouldn't be adequate if it were fully enforced?" Second, there was contention over "the ability of present engineering technology to create ventilation and hooding systems efficient enough to meet the new regulations." Finally, alluding to the ongoing crisis brought about by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), audience members argued that the new equipment demanded by the regulations would be "cost-prohibitive or energy-wasteful."

In February 1975, more than fifty industry representatives gathered in Houston to

form the Silica Safety Association. Its purpose, they proclaimed, was to "investigate and report on possible health hazards involved in [the] use of silica products and to recommend adequate protective measures considered economically feasible." Shortly thereafter, the SSA wrote to various industries requesting financial support—and also urged companies to write letters to OSHA, requesting a delay in the public hearings on NIOSH's proposed standards. In these appeals, it was clear that workers' health was not foremost on the SSA's agenda. The association's president, L.L. Sline, owner of Sline International Painters, Inc., opened by noting that NIOSH's recommendations "could have [a] serious cost impact for all sandblasting operations." The primary purpose of the Silica Safety Association, he explained, was "to represent interested parties in the attempt to assure the continued use of sand in abrasive blasting operations." The SSA was soon receiving favorable attention in the trade press. The *American Painting Contractor*, for example, editorialized in May 1975 that the survival of sandblasting with silica "might well depend upon the [Silica Safety] association's accomplishments in the next few months."

In the course of the next few months, the SSA developed its argument on behalf of the continued use of sand. The organization held that if workers used "proper protective devices" there was little danger of excessive exposure. Therefore, if equipment was capable of lowering exposure to "safe" levels, there was no need to change the existing threshold-limit value for silica. L.L. Sline, whose painting firm had forty to fifty sandblasters operating every day, was convinced that sandblasting was safe: "We've done thousands of man-hours of sandblasting with thousands of tons of sand, and we've never had a case of silicosis."

This was the general line that the SSA took in public: "the best available technology could now protect workers," and the reason that workers had come down with silicosis in the past was that they "had no air-fed hoods." What the SSA officials did not reveal, however, was a private study completed nine months earlier that showed that "under conditions considered good work practice," in a

plant of one of the officers of the association, nearly half of all air samples were above the threshold-limit value.

While the SSA was gathering its energies, OSHA—with a relatively small and dispersed staff—was consumed by the overwhelming responsibility of deciding on which NIOSH recommendations to adopt. With competing demands for resources, OSHA focused on other issues, and the SSA was successful in delaying any action on the proposed silica standards. Even under Carter appointee Eula Bingham, under whose watch OSHA adopted more occupational-safety standards than in any similar period before or since, no new silica regulations were adopted. In 1981 the SSA claimed credit for forestalling and delaying any new standards, declaring that "to date, the efforts of SSA have been the major influence in the continuation of sandblasting in the United States."

THE FINAL blow to the NIOSH proposal to ban sand was dealt by the arrival of the Reagan administration. The executive director of the SSA commented that "with the change in administration, the ever-increasing avalanche of government regulations has been reversed. As a result, OSHA's proposed abrasive blasting standard has been moved from a top priority 'target' regulation to the back burner." To make matters worse, the administration gutted OSHA by drastically reducing the number of inspectors and inspections nationwide.

By 1982, the Washington environment had changed so drastically that the SSA began to question the need to sustain itself. The February 1982 *Silica Safety Association Newsletter* noted that "it's been a while since our last newsletter [because] federal regulations have also been few and far between; so, as we say about sleeping dogs . . ." Almost a year later, Sline appealed to member organizations to keep contributing or face the closure of the SSA's offices. "The SSA has been saving you anywhere between \$150.00 to \$300.00 [for] every sandblaster you have had working for you each year," he reminded the members. He argued that industry owed a great deal to SSA because it had saved substantial sums "by not

having sandblasters and others working in the area of Abrasive Blasting medically examined and other unnecessary procedures."

Slone's appeal was in vain, however. In June 1983 the SSA's board of directors met and concluded that because "regulatory activity in and from Washington is at a dormant level . . . the association should be put on hold." The records of the organization were placed in storage and the offices closed.

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LAURENCE BROWN was born in Caplan, Louisiana, in 1946, and, after graduating from the local high school, worked on his father's farm. When he was seventeen years old, he was drafted into the army and served in Vietnam for five years. Following discharge in 1977, Brown, who was white, began working as a sandblaster and painter for a local paint company that contracted nonunion workers out to virtually every major refinery in the Port Arthur, Texas, area. Most of the time he wore a desert hood and sometimes a paper dust mask as he blasted the inside of storage tanks and other vessels, preparing them for painting. He also sandblasted pipes and pipe racks in order to clean and recondition them. In addition to the massive dust clouds that often enveloped him, Brown was exposed to the asbestos and other insulating material that covered these pipes. In 1983 he took up work as a truck mechanic and finally in 1985 began work as a farm laborer. Three years later, in 1988, at the age of forty-one, he developed night sweats, violent coughing, and shortness of breath. He went to a veterans hospital, where he was diagnosed with tuberculosis. Two years later, unemployed, he had lost over twenty pounds and suffered from persistent coughing and occasional episodes of vomiting. He had difficulty even exerting himself to take a shower. In June 1990 his x-rays were re-evaluated, and he was diagnosed with silicosis. Two years later, he was dead, at the age of forty-six. He had sandblasted for only ten years.

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In the early 1980s, as the SSA was winding down its operations in Washington, a new epidemic of silicosis was emerging in the oil fields of West Texas. These fields, which had long been in decline, were revived by the OPEC crises of the 1970s; when domestic oil

prices skyrocketed, marginal fields were suddenly profitable once again. The process of restarting the fields involved reconditioning and cleaning many miles of piping and storage tanks—sandblasting away decades' worth of tar and oil residues. This work was typically performed by small, nonunion contractors.

Many of those employed to do the dirty and dangerous work of sandblasting were Mexican migrants who had recently arrived in the boom towns of West Texas. Many of the workers were never provided with adequate protection from the silica sand they blasted. In the mid-1980s, young men began to appear in doctors' offices, complaining of shortness of breath, coughing, and sweating. By the early 1990s, scores of silicotic workers, mostly Hispanic and mostly young, had been diagnosed.

Many in the industry seemed to assume that the epidemic would come and go—that most of the migrant workers would move on to other parts of the country, or return to Mexico when the sandblasting operations ceased or their health deteriorated. But in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Texas workers exposed to silica began to file lawsuits. They could not productively sue their employers, who were protected by workers'-compensation statutes that had been devised in the 1930s to minimize liability. They could, however, sue the sand dealers and equipment makers who supplied their employers: under Texas common law, those selling dangerous products had an obligation to adequately warn users of potential hazards. Using legal strategies developed in the asbestos litigation of the 1970s and 1980s, plaintiffs' lawyers began to reach substantial settlements, and achieved what OSHA did not: many of the companies began to substitute nonsilica abrasives for the deadly sand previously used.

In 1993, just as the Texas workers were winning their settlements, the Clinton administration arrived, and some of Washington's sleeping dogs began to stir. Under Clinton, OSHA has taken silicosis more seriously—although it is still not clear whether the agency will fight again for reduced silica inhalation standards.

Two OSHA administrators in particular have played quietly heroic roles. Davitt

McAteer (himself the son of a miner) and Andrea Hricko of the Mine Safety and Health Administration have documented the spread of silicosis to the coal mines of the eastern United States, where it had never been considered a threat. In the past two decades, as the coal resources of West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Kentucky have become tapped out, mining firms have pursued veins that are thinner and deeper in the ground. This has meant that miners have had to drill through silica-laden rock to reach the coal. McAteer points out that miners now use "better drills that can drill through rock they couldn't go through before—but that means they are drilling through silica." In late 1994 a Pennsylvania insurance company came to McAteer and Hricko and requested an investigation, saying that it had noticed a sharp increase in silicosis deaths in young miners.

In the ensuing three years, regulators' concern has continued to increase. Scientists have discovered correlations between silica exposure and certain cancers, and the International Agency for Research on Cancer has named silica as a probable human carcinogen. Three major silicosis conferences—one of them sponsored by OSHA—have been held since 1995. And former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich established a special emphasis program on silica, with the announced goal of eliminating silicosis as a work hazard in the United States.

Despite this new attention, it remains the case that none of the reforms recommended by NIOSH have yet been implemented. And industry groups are marshaling their lobbying forces once again: in 1997, the "Silica Coalition" arrived in Washington. The Silica Coalition describes itself as "a diverse association of trade associations and companies involved in the mining, processing, production, and use of silica and silica-containing materials." While ostensibly aimed at providing "sound science," it's clear that the Silica Coalition's true purpose is to resist new regulatory efforts.

With a Republican Congress and a timid

executive branch, the silica industry may outlast OSHA once again in hand-to-hand competition. But OSHA regulations aren't the only potential weapon against silicosis. The Washington law firm Payton, Boggs recently sponsored a conference called "Silica in the Next Century," at which industry representatives and their lawyers vented their fears of asbestos-scale liability suits. In an abstract entitled "Toxic Tort Litigation Overview," Jean McHarg noted that "approximately two million workers are exposed to respirable silica annually If only 10 percent of occupationally exposed workers (or their heirs) believed their lung cancer is due to their occupational silica exposure. . . ."

At present it appears that NIOSH and OSHA, along with private industry, are approaching a moment of decision. On the one hand, the cooperation between the government and industry that led to the March 1997 National Silicosis Conference has resulted in a generally higher awareness of the issue. (One measure of this is the number of silicosis-related sites that have developed over the course of the past year on the World Wide Web.) On the other hand, this new public attention has not reduced the underlying conflicts. If OSHA makes new attempts to reduce inhalation standards or to ban the use of sand as an abrasive, epic battles between government and industry are sure to ensue. And recent attention to the carcinogenic effects of silica—and the resulting fear that silica is not only an occupational, but an environmental hazard as well—will undoubtedly broaden the debate and create untold new conflicts. ●

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American Television and Consumer Democracy

Philip Green

AMONG CONTEMPORARY students of popular culture, a consensus has begun to emerge about American television quite different from the view dominant only a few decades ago. The theorists of "mass society" criticized commercial television from a standpoint informed both by intellectual disdain for cultural trash, and political fearfulness in the face of cultural conformity. Today, the cultural field is seen by postmodern theorists as a realm of plurality, play, and multiple meanings, where members of different subcultures appropriate cultural commodities for their own purposes.

This appropriation may indeed happen from time to time. The problem with the theory of mass society was not so much its aesthetic snobbery as its understanding of communication as always and only one-way. Even obsessive television watchers are not passive receptacles. Socialization is a two-way process, and we can never predict, for any particular individual, what will happen during that process.

On the other hand, it would be a mistake to make too much of the phenomenon of communications "feedback." Because most people do not regularly suffer from false consciousness, one of the effects of ideological discourse is always to call up resistance to itself; and the more so the greater its pretensions to "realism"—which do reach a kind of apogee in episodic television. There is a difference, though, between cultural artifacts that leave the field of interpretation open and those that attempt, even if sometimes unsuccessfully, to close it. That television's message is often "seen through" by women or minorities (or audiences generally) should not lead us to mistake its

general direction. The pervasive argument that human life makes sense, social forces are comprehensible, "happy" endings are normal (justice is done), and the meaning of what people say is ultimately unambiguous—all this represents a secular version of the sentiment that "God's in His Heaven/All's right with the world." As men and women, we are reassured that a fundamental sympathy, recognized in the institution of marriage and the family, binds us together. As citizens of diverse social backgrounds, we are told that only "whiteness" gives access to the highest level of rewards, but that tolerance of differences is a recognized social virtue. And as political/economic subjects, we not only find that our cultural milieu rewards passive consumption, but we are also assured that there is ultimately nothing to be active about; politics on American television is notable only by its absence.

Thus postmodern critics substitute a legitimate insight about the freedom with which ideas circulate—all of us can reinterpret any text for our own purposes—for the quite separate truth that there is an enduring material *structure* of cultural power to which those of us who merely consume cultural commodities are always subject. With this sleight-of-hand, the hope that media of mass communication might encourage moral ambiguity, transformative critique, or the justification of structural change, simply disappears. Why bother, when anyone can generate her own critique in the privacy of her own home by "appropriating" *Seinfeld*—as though mild amusement had somehow become socially defiant? As though individual acts of consumption had somehow become politically significant? Carried to this point, subjectivist theories of interpretation justify political passivity.

I want to argue instead that "mass society" theory is still essentially correct, once the confusion between helpless audiences and passive

consumers is clarified. To support this argument, I will first draw a few contrasts between American television (at its most prestigious) and its quite different British counterpart; and then try to account for the difference.

In a wonderful moment of serendipity, the same story line appeared on two very different television networks one night in 1988. On ABC-TV's *L.A. Law*, Kuzak (unsuccessfully) defended an accused rapist by attempting to show that the victim's conduct could reasonably have led the accused to believe that "she wanted it." On BBC-TV's *Blind Justice*, its female protagonist was doing the very same thing. In each episode, the defense attorney apologized to the victim at the end and was told by her to go to hell. There the similarities end; it's the differences that are revealing.

The American episode concludes, after the accused's conviction, with a confrontation between Kuzak and Van Owen, which soon devolves into the familiar subideological conflict between order and constitutional liberty, "putting a rapist back on the streets" versus "even a rapist deserves the best defense he can get." "Why," snaps Kuzak with the last word, "don't you just shoot the bastard and not bother with a trial?" Civil liberties wins the argument but the rights of an innocent victim win our emotions. America is celebrated (by Kuzak) for its protection of civil liberties, the rapist goes to prison, and having it both ways wins the day.

Blind Justice moves in another direction entirely. Assigned by her firm to defend the accused man, Catherine Hughes demurs with the uncompromising statement, "I don't do consent rapes." Unlike Kuzak, she makes us aware of a crucial asymmetry within the accepted standards of "fair trial" and "due process of law." A "consent" defense to a rape charge actually *requires* that the character of the victim be blackened, in order to show that the defendant could reasonably have expected *this* woman to "consent," despite the possibility that in her own mind she had no intention at all of doing so. However, forced by circumstances into finally taking the case, she does what she has said she won't do—"just doing her job"—and secures the accused's acquittal. (This is the most likely outcome of all such cases, but one that *L.A. Law* has carefully hid-

den from us.) There are no conclusive reflections about "putting a rapist back on the streets," because for the creators of *Blind Justice* the issue is not one strand of conventional thought versus another. Instead, Catherine resigns to join a radical law collective that she had previously scorned for its marginality; a collective whose members presumably will understand why she doesn't "do consent rapes."

Unlike *L.A. Law*, *Blind Justice* recognizes that in the law of rape, consent is inferred only on the basis of what a man *as a man* might "reasonably" have thought a woman "wanted," even though force has admittedly been used. This doctrine of "consent" wipes out a woman's perception of her own non-consent, and thus the law's pretence of neutrality and equality is belied in practice.¹ For a lawyer who takes the rights of women seriously, then, the larger question is how she can do her job in an unjust society. It's not that this question couldn't be answered on American television, but that it could never be raised. Catherine's only possible response, in her own view, is the morally disturbing conclusion that she must change her life.

SERENDIPITY AGAIN: in one week of December 1993 it was possible on British television to see episodes of two police drama series, *Prime Suspect 3* and *Between the Lines*, in sequence with an Emmy-winning two-part episode of the American *Homicide*. At first glance there was a superficial resemblance, in that all three concluded with failure. *Prime Suspect 3* and *Homicide* both featured a detailed interrogation of a "prime suspect," who walked away unscathed at the end. There the resemblance ended, however, and it is again the fundamental difference that was so striking.

Put simply, *Homicide* was a paean to the efforts of those who try on behalf of the rest of us to make "law and order" a reality. They do not succeed in every case, but as one detective remarks, "the great thing about being in *Homicide* is that there's always more of them." The failure of the police symbolizes their humanity; nobody is perfect, especially when forced to endure the hazards and bru-

talities of "life on the street." This is the strange, inverted version of Hollywood naturalism, beautifully realized in its gritty urban surfaces, but totally unlike the socially conscious naturalism of Zola or Dreiser or Norris. Here, the good guys are us, on this side of the interrogation table; and the bad guys are them, on the other.²

Prime Suspect 3 and *Between the Lines* are not about the defense of law and order. Rather, they are about the frightening ambiguity of police work, or of the very concept of the "police," who, as any picketer or community activist could testify, do not exist only to protect citizens from crime. The police exist also to aggrandize their own powers as an interest group and a closed fraternity, and above all to protect the state and the elites that staff and run it from having to undergo full democratic accountability for their own often illicit behaviors. The murderer in *Prime Suspect 3* does not walk away simply because Detective Chief Inspector Jane Tennison is unable to break his alibi, as in *Homicide*. Rather, he walks because the police hierarchy and powerful political forces have combined to make it impossible for her to pursue her case properly from the beginning.

This is also the constant theme of *Between the Lines*, a series about a mythical "Complaints Investigation Bureau" that investigates alleged (and often real) police crimes. Its ambiguity runs even deeper than that of *Prime Suspect 3*, for the narrative and symbolic manipulations by which ideological narratives lead us to their unique conclusions are entirely absent. There is systematic injustice, and there is police work that ineluctably leads to it, yet seems necessary in its own right. What exactly are we to think?

It's not merely that *Between the Lines* emphasizes the reality of injustice more than the humanity of its characters or that its "hero" himself engages in cover-ups to "protect the honor of the force," but that even the humanization of its protagonists is equivocal. The male lead is a philanderer who at one point systematically betrays both women in his life: an ironic commentary on his assigned task of rooting out the same kind of work-related behavior among his colleagues. American visual

culture always politicizes sex, but we learn nothing about "law and order" itself from the sexual bickering between, say, Kuzak and Van Owen. Watching *Between the Lines*, we are confronted with the real meaning of the slogan, "the personal is political."

That Tony Clark betrays his wife and his mistress (herself a policewoman involved in a cover-up), while compromising two of his own cases in the process, does not by itself reveal anything about the alleged politics of personal life to us. What's truly political is the revelation of how thoroughgoing, how all-enveloping, is the life of secrecy, betrayal, and antisocial solidarity that the police are forced to lead. A man whose job it is to root out lies is himself constantly telling lies, and does not even notice the contradiction. Watching him negotiating his sex life we wonder not about male philandering, which would be a trivializing response, but about policing as an organized activity: whether "law and corruption" might not be a more accurate epithet than "law and order"; and how it is that a good policeman may be not quite a good man.

These British shows do what cannot be done on American commercial television: they challenge the ideology of "law and order" itself. The case for the police is stated with unequivocal tough-mindedness in all these series. But it remains an argument, rather than, as in American versions of the genre, a conclusion all the more decisive for being implicit.

ALTHOUGH THE programs I've referred to here are exceptional rather than typical, even a more general account of the British system makes the same point. During the time frame from which these comparisons are taken, the entire over-the-air system consisted of four channels. Channel One and Channel Two are both BBC public service channels run by an independent board, but Channel One is considered to be the "popular" channel and Channel Two the more "cultural" channel. Channel Three is "independent" (that is, commercial) and is governed both by an independent board and "the market" (that is, advertisers). Channel Four, the "minority interests" channel, was instituted in the early 1980s. In principle, BBC One vies

for audiences with ITV, the commercial channel, and is considered to be performing well if it stays within ITV's range. BBC Two, the more "elite" channel, is considered to be doing very well if it draws an audience share of fifteen as opposed to thirty-five to forty for the popular channels. And Channel Four is considered to have a "very satisfactory performance" in the ten-to-twelve range.

WHAT'S MOST decisively different about this system is that it makes possible the destruction of artificial connections—which in the United States have the hard reality of a natural phenomenon—between television genres and viewing-time segments. In one week in England in 1994, for example, the following programs appeared during the "prime time" hours of 9 P.M. to 11 P.M.:

Two sporting events; two full-length news coverage programs every night; sixteen documentaries or exposés of various kinds, including three about controversial political issues, two about cancer, one about gay nuns, two of particular interest to women, two about cars, and one about American movies by blacks; two original plays; two series about doctors; six sitcoms, two of them American; nine films, seven of them American, the others Australian and English; one "true crime"; three comedy programs; four police series (including a rerun of *Between the Lines*); two private eyes (one of them a woman, the other Sherlock Holmes); two programs of questions directed at public figures; one dramatized best-selling novel episode; one soap opera; three popular-song and culture programs; one serious quiz show and one game show; one program of childhood reminiscences of a well-known politician; one appeal for Bosnia, carried in a short form every night on the BBC; two segments of an extraordinary, multi-episode documentary film (produced by Channel Four) of daily life in China; an appreciation of the Chrysler Building by John Malkovich; and from a unique and indescribable Channel Four series of short plays, an episode in which the anti-Semite Degas and the leftist Jew Pissarro, both once central members of the Impressionist movement but now no longer talking to each

other, are brought to the Channel Four studio to debate the Dreyfus Affair.

Thus the hierarchy of American television, in which (especially on "prime time") the expensive programming of narrative fiction and Hollywood movies is privileged compared to all other uses of visual technology, is here overturned. The entire range of programming that in the United States would be ghettoized as "public television," less than and different from the real thing, appears interchangeably with *Dynasty* and *Roseanne*, *Murphy Brown* and *Home Improvement*, all together making up a metatext that to American eyes is unrecognizable.

Nothing I have said here constitutes a judgment of aesthetic quality. There is one ultimately aesthetic *and* political characterization, though, that can be offered with confidence. Hollywood television is made for people who, in the ordinary course of events, will spend their evenings passively consuming its cultural commodities. Occasionally this system produces major "events," recognized by everyone with a kind of astonished reverence, before they disappear back into the metatext from which they so briefly emerge. This television is not designed to compete with other ways of living life, except with its generic cousin cinema. The presumption is that to be immersed in it but not really engaged with it is the normal way of living. For delivering this kind of entertainment which, to paraphrase T.S. Eliot, is designed to distract us from distraction by distraction, American television is unexcelled.

It is also possible to "live with" British television this way, especially its soap operas, which are even more the subject of national attention in all social circles than are their American counterparts. But these all run in the early evening when Americans, whose real night life has not yet begun, are watching endless local and national recountings of the same "news." British prime-time television, contrastingly, is also and perhaps even equally made for people who might otherwise be spending their evenings reading, or working, or pursuing hobbies, or going out, or engaging with the unpleasant material world.

In sum, British television does not colonize

the consciousnesses of its potential audience in the same way or to the same extent as its American counterpart. It is not a total, self-referential world, designed literally to screen out all alternatives to passive consumption. Instead, it offers the passive consumption of culture as one alternative to all those other, less passive modes of linking cultural productions with their material referents. If we must spend some of our nights watching other people's versions of the worlds we live in, this is certainly the most varied, pluralistic, and open way in which those nights can be programmed for us.

How can this be? With the exception of Channel Four's founding, the creators of British television have not had the faintest intention of providing either more democracy or more pluralism in visual culture. The BBC was conceived of (by Lord Reith) with a frankly elitist and paternalistic mission, and though it might be barely possible to imagine a similar outcome of some future reform effort in the United States, its explicit justifications would have to be totally different. Nevertheless, the various components of the system produce results strikingly variant from those American viewers are used to, and it is worth considering just how this is accomplished.

There are certainly profound cultural differences between the United States and Great Britain, the one being anarchically and even violently democratic, unequivocally consumerist, and relentlessly progressive; the other being authoritarian and hierarchical, and still marked by strong elements of traditionalism and social deference. By its very terms, though, this cultural account can hardly tell us why the more democratic nation produces a monolithic televisual culture, compared to the variegated output of its more authoritarian counterpart. The tradition of cultural elitism at the BBC probably accounts for the occasional prime-time appearance of Restoration tragedies or sober discussions of postmodernism in the arts. But it cannot account for the political radicalism of *Blind Justice*, the corrosive cynicism of *Between the Lines* and *Prime Suspect 3*, the uninhibited female self-expression of *Absolutely Fabulous*, or (later at night) the

musical outrageousness of Frank Zappa, who never appeared on American network television—the first name in what could be an endless roster of creative artists subject to the same negative characterization. Only attention to institutional structures, to the way visual culture is produced and distributed rather than to the cultural ideals it might be presumed to express, can provide the necessary explanation.

AMERICAN NETWORK television can be characterized simply: it is a market-driven industry par excellence. More precisely, it is an oligopoly, in which a handful of producers dominate the bulk of the market and compete with each other for profit. In fact, profit, as is the case for most oligopolies, is guaranteed, in that the worth of the basic asset—the network franchise—is beyond price. Monopolizing a group of channels is not what it once was, now that the UHF band on cable television is almost indefinitely extensible. But other producers, even the pay-for-play movie channels, are mere satellites within this system; the networks are the planets.

But each of the networks must reproduce and expand its value, because the oligopoly is competitive. There is no fixed source of income: theoretically, every program produced by NBC or CBS or ABC or TNT or Fox could not only lose money but fail to return a single dollar, if every viewer absolutely preferred a competing program on some other network. Advertisers would go on strike, shareholders would disinvest, the network's stock would collapse, and hundreds of corporate raiders would be competing to buy control and throw the existing ownership and management out on its collective ear. Though profit seeking is only comparative, it is as desperate and ruthless as if it were absolute. Market share within the oligopoly must be roughly maintained, if for no other reason than to guarantee the power and wealth of its rulers. The ratings game, which measures market share, is a life-and-death matter. Millions of advertising dollars, and more important, dozens or even hundreds of well-paying jobs, can be lost on a single ratings point.

The key to the operation of this system is that, as has often been said, networks do not

sell programs to audiences but audiences to advertisers. All the major advertisers on commercial television are in exactly the same position as the networks: they are competitors in an oligopoly, trying to maintain or improve market share. What they know is that if the other oligopolists advertise and they don't, their product will fade from sight. If, less dramatically, their programs are only marginally less popular than those of their oligopolistic competitors, that may or may not be bad for sales, but it cannot possibly be good: once again, heads will roll. Innovation or originality are therefore, and for good reason, fundamentally suspect.³ Commercial television, though its narratives are often predicated on a never-ending tease, must still in the end give the kind of satisfaction that maintains interest in a given program as a series of meaningful outcomes, the most meaningful of which is the advertising time it sells.

In order to understand the way this system of oligopolistic competition determines the production of cultural commodities, we have to rid ourselves of fantasies about "free markets." The notion of "consumer democracy" describes a system in which producers respond to every shifting demand of the market, and the implication we are supposed to draw is that cultural production shares the most important feature of political democracy, consumer choice being a close analog to voter choice. This much is true in the sense, and only in the sense, that political parties are also oligopolists, and that party competition is oligopolistic competition. But in the well-known analysis of rational-choice theory, competitive parties organized for the winning of elections therefore tend to deliver *similarity rather than diversity*.⁴

A SIMPLE THOUGHT experiment will show why this must be so. Let us imagine three companies, A, B, and C, that dominate a particular consumer market and whose products are largely indistinguishable—the condition under which oligopolies arise in the first place. Suppose company A decided to market a *distinguishable* product; that is, one catering to a part of the market not yet actually satisfied by the oligopoly. This would re-

quire a major diversion of resources, but at great and pointless risk. Because similar types of products cannot meaningfully be patented or copyrighted, B and C would immediately copy A if A's innovation were successful, and A's brief lead in marketing a new product would disappear (after one season, if we are thinking of television shows). On the other hand, if the innovation were a failure, A would have wasted precious resources and lost some portion of market share by being, in effect, a guinea pig for the rest of the industry. The game is not worth the candle: little to be gained and much to be lost.

Free-market oligopoly cannot produce diversity. It cannot cater to minority or exceptional tastes unless these can be isolated as an identifiable group of potential consumers. This is especially true of television, where the traditional product is so familiar, the costs of production so high, and the risks of failure so great. Network television caters only to the *average viewer*. The average viewer may be different at different times of day, and for different television genres: children for Saturday morning cartoons, women for daytime television and soap operas, men for professional sports, adult families for prime-time television, adult men for cop shows. Whatever the genre or time, though, only the mass audience—of women, of families, of men, of children—is the advertiser's target. More specifically, only the mass audience of likely consumers is the target.

Television is specifically intended to be addictive, like heroin or crack or any other addictive substance; the main goal of any commercial television program is *not to be switched off*. Just as, for example, the central purpose of visual pornography ("hard core") is to get its audience to watch more pornography (or else the industry would go out of business), so the central purpose of any television episode is to get the viewer to watch more television: the next segment, leading to the next set of ads; the next program, leading to four new sets of ads; and the same program(s) next week, leading to a repetitive seeing of the same ads.

This being the case, we can no more imagine American television producers consciously trying to insert into the middle of this sched-

ule a sense of holy terror, unbearable anxiety, Brechtian cynicism, or profound outrage at injustice, than we can imagine the producer of a pornographic film inserting one of Bergman's endless husband/wife dialogues in between two scenes of orgiastic coupling. "Get on with it!" is their common motto. This is not to say that intellectual thoughtfulness will never be found in fictional presentations on commercial (or public) television, but only that it must be kept in its place, bracketed off from the rest of the schedule and at the same time reintegrated into it by a major publicity campaign, so that it will not lead us to want to do something other than watch television. It's not just that only the average viewer is addressed by this system, but that the average viewer is offered only average aesthetic experiences: nothing that might turn our attention away from television-watching itself, by throwing us into a state of real emotion or intellection. Exceptions stay firmly within the bounds of humanistic naturalism, do not stray far ideologically, and refuse any possibility of formal innovation that might confuse viewers who understand television as a site of relaxation and passive enjoyment.

The caustic wit of *Roseanne*, the quirky multiculturalism of *Northern Exposure*, the sometime feminism of *Cagney and Lacey*, the racial consciousness of *Frank's Place* or *A Different World*, the social satire of *The Simpsons*, the sometimes counterideological "movie of the week" productions of Robert Greenwald and his successors have stretched television's boundaries slightly. It would be wrong to think that network television always remains the same; the explosion of same-sex weddings in the 1996 season is a case in point. But at no point will network television ever be intellectually independent or aesthetically imaginative in the British sense. Nothing in the United States is equivalent to those challenges to dominant understandings of the world described above. What cannot be inserted into the schedule of commercial television is precisely what is inserted, only occasionally but often enough to be noteworthy, into the British television schedule. In the soap opera *Brookside*, one 1993 episode featured both a political party debate on the National Health

Service and a discussion between a teacher and her student about the latter's lesbianism, which concluded with the two going off to make love. Neither real politics nor uncensored female (or male) sexuality is permitted on American network television, for either of those shocks to the system might prevent some element of the audience from being delivered to the advertisers who foot the bill.

EVEN THE occasional originality of Hollywood cinema is beyond the reach of American television. Nothing on network television could possibly equal the visual terrorism of *Psycho*, the nightmarish nihilism of *Jacob's Ladder*, the elegiac look and tone of *Unforgiven*, the unrepentant vengefulness of *I Spit on Your Grave* or *Thelma and Louise*, or the sexual transgressiveness of *Basic Instinct*. As for those independent but still recognizably narrative films that trail in Hollywood's wake, there is no equivalent anywhere within the television system, no matter how many channels cable has added to it.

Instead, the metatext of American commercial television reveals a unique national ideology and aesthetic style that go hand in hand. In this version of storytelling, "problems" are introduced only to be solved, critiques only to be repudiated. People share gender unity as members of families and class equality as consumers; knowledge of significant social differences among them is suppressed; any developmental needs that can't be expressed as patterns of material consumption might as well not exist; and visual distraction itself (the source of television's immense profits) is firmly positioned as a central—perhaps the central—communal need. Just as in the midst of a bitter divorce we can enjoy a weekly narrative of family unity, in the middle of political crisis we can enjoy a weekly narrative of social integration and political passivity.⁵

American television's addictiveness, and its unending, unimaginative conformity to a narrow range of intellectual and aesthetic possibility, is not without consequences. Though there is no evidence that watching television changes minds in any particular ideological direction, there is plentiful evidence of its pacificatory effect; and of its tendency (espe-

cially when watched heavily by children) to bring about a confusion between the real and the fanciful.⁶ Unlike movies (which seem to emanate phantasmatically from within ourselves), television appears simply as the “real” upon which we are eavesdropping. It is just there being life. And even though we know that life is not a sitcom or soap opera or police drama, even while we may laugh at their silliness, they still seem to be about American people leading American lives; the unalloyed aesthetic naturalism of television positions us as inhabitants of the same world it is bringing into our living room.⁷

NOR IS THE apolitical character of television without a serious politics. American television series are carefully tailored to fit into genres that are sexually and also nowadays racially coded to find and not to offend a particular primary audience, an audience that can instantly be identified simply by watching the ads. But with the exception of only the most successful “crossover” programs (for example, *The Cosby Show*, *L.A. Law*), they accomplish this via the technique of “narrowcasting”; that is, quite deliberately structuring and *then* appealing to a fractured public. This public cannot help but recognize its re-presentation as ghettoized. When a white woman watches a program for white women she knows what she is watching (if somehow she managed to miss this point, it would be brought forcibly to her attention at the first commercial break). In this way American television’s simulacrum of pluralism affirms the divisions of the sexual and racial order even while seeming to appeal to particular subject positions within it. This is not a genuine democratic pluralism, but a pluralism that cancels itself out. So ideological ambiguities of race, class, and gender do occur and reoccur, because the social order itself is immersed in them to a perhaps historically unprecedented degree. But in the television world they are always brought under control in the end (if only via the extreme sanction of cancellation).

At this point, then, we are finally in a position to understand how the British public service system, both as I am idealizing it and as it more or less has been working for fifteen

years, actually sustains itself. The answer is that reversing the structure of American commercial television also reverses its priorities. In the absence of oligopolistic competition, standards of “success” change drastically. Market competition produces conformity; the elimination or the attenuation of competitive pressure produces variety. The opposite of competition, of course, is protection; and if we use this word rather than its more particular counterpart, “subsidy,” we can see what it is that makes the difference.

BBC-TV and Channel Four function behind a protective wall, and this wall was designed to protect them not only from market competition but from the political process. In the case of BBC, its financing has traditionally been provided primarily by the television license fee, which must be paid annually by every television-owning household in Britain, for every television set that is owned (or rented). Public television has thus been refinanced yearly, without the necessity of asking for any legislative appropriation; as long as the fee could be raised without resistance, the system was stable. (As with other tertiary services, the pressures of globalization assure that it won’t be so much longer.) As for Channel Four, it is permitted to sell time to advertisers within certain limits agreed on with the commercial channel, but the sponsor relationship is mostly arm’s length. Particular products or advertisers are not identified with particular programs, and the American style of corporate pressure on producers, or of interest-group pressure on corporate sponsors, is unimaginable. Much more crucial, however, is the fact that the main source of protected revenue for Channel Four is a legislatively mandated set-aside: the commercial channel allocates 10 percent of gross revenues as a subsidy to Channel Four, and this is part of the cost it must bear for being licensed to monopolize public airspace.

Even more so than in the case of the BBC, there is no built-in pressure for reducing or eliminating this subsidy, since its ultimate source is the indirect and invisible tax that advertisers impose on consuming viewers (and in any event, the argument that particular licensees have a *right* to hold this license in the first place, and to do anything they want with

it, is simply incredible). Imagine a new network financed by the existing networks and mandated by the Federal Communications Commission to give special representation to women, gays, African-Americans, and so on, and one can begin to imagine the extent of the difference.

So the most important criterion for maintaining a vitally pluralistic visual culture on the public service model is that its management and its financing are independent of both political and commercial pressures. Thus to call the British system "elitist" and the American system "democratic" would be to miss the point. American television is governed by an economic elite and, where public, a nonrepresentative political elite; all decisions on the ground are subject to their imprimatur. The elite that dominates British television (historically) is, contrastingly, an elite drawn in large measure from the creative community. It has always lacked appropriate regional, minority,

and female representation, but in principle it is open to the claims of those groups, as long as their representatives have the talent to make a contribution—as why should they not? The sub-business class that controls American television may well be more democratic in its composition, but that is irrelevant; its only purpose is to prevent imaginative acts of creation from taking place.

In the future there may be possibilities for democratizing the production of mass culture that will go far beyond the British model. But they will have to start from its basic rejection of the false promises of "consumer democracy," for the "free market" can never produce anything but an unfree culture. ●

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1. See Catharine MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), ch. 9; and also Carole Pateman, "Women and Consent," in *The Disorder of Women* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1989), pp. 71-89.

2. The most notable exception is the HBO movie *Criminal Justice*, with Forest Whitaker as an alleged, and ultimately convicted, murderer whose rights are given scant acknowledgment, and of whose guilt or innocence we are never certain. Here we are left in a genuinely ambiguous state of unease about "law and order." However, HBO is an exception only by virtue of its institutional position. Since for any given film it has a guaranteed audience which has already paid to see whatever films it's going to show, its projects do not have to pass the standard marketability tests. Thus HBO is receptive to commercially dubious projects as long as they might get favorable reviews, and not raise the kind of flak that can result in falling subscriptions. In this respect HBO is in a position comparable to that of Channel 4 in Britain, as discussed below.

3. The fate of "minority [a euphemism for "black"]-oriented" television is a sad case in point. See "The Transformation of the Television Industry and the Social Production of Blackness," in Herman Gray's *Watching Race: Television and*

the Struggle for Blackness (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

4. The original and still perhaps the most influential analysis is that of Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957).

5. We should not confuse the stylistic difference of series such as *The X-Files* or *Millennium* with the aesthetic imagination. These merely add febrile paranoia to an already unhealthy dose of unreality.

6. See Neil Postman, "The Teachings of the Media Curriculum," and George Gerbner et al., "Charting the Mainstream: Television's Contributions to Political Orientations," in Donald Lazere, ed., *American Media and Mass Culture: Left Perspectives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); and Stephen Kline, "Limits to the Imagination: The Marketing of Children's Culture," in Ian Angus and Sut Jhally, eds., *Cultural Politics in Contemporary America* (New York: Routledge, 1989).

7. An American television watcher would have to see a non-naturalistic product of British television such as *Pennies From Heaven* or *The Singing Detective* even to begin to comprehend what such television might look like.

Bukharin's Fate

I wrote [the prison manuscripts] mostly at night, literally wrenching them from my heart. I fervently beg you not to let this work disappear. . . . Don't let this work perish. I repeat and emphasize: This is completely apart from my personal fate. Don't let it be lost! . . . Have pity! Not on me, on the work!

-Bukharin prison letter to Stalin, 1937

Manuscripts do not burn.

-Mikhail Bulgakov

Stephen F. Cohen

THE HISTORY of Nikolai Bukharin's novel is almost certainly unique—even in the dismal twentieth century with its mountain of literature written by people doomed by politics. Normally we would be deeply moved by the tragic fate of the book and its author, but they are products of the Soviet experience, about which most of us have little if any such sentiment. Imagine, therefore, the history of *How It All Began* apart from its geography and politics.

A once beloved founding father is falsely accused of terrorism and treason against the state he helped create and is arrested by the bloody despot who now rules it. Tormented in prison for a year and completely cut off from the outside world, he is forced to stand trial and publicly confess to having been a vile enemy of the political ideas and aspirations to which he had devoted his life and had symbolized for almost twenty years. Two days later he is shot in a secret execution cell, his place of burial never discovered. His entire biography is excised from the nation's official history, his name lingering only in the epithet "enemy of the people."

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Unknown to anyone except the despot and a few jailers, who are themselves soon shot, the victim managed to write four book-length manuscripts during his year in prison, even while being coerced into his scripted role at the show trial. Uncharacteristic of a man so absorbed with contemporary politics and theory, the last manuscript was an unfinished novel about his childhood. But because his name continues to be anathematized by the despot's successors, all his prison writings remain buried in secret state archives for more than half a century.

Eventually a leader untainted by past crimes comes to power determined to repudiate the tyrant and undo his political legacy. In order to achieve this, he must fully exonerate the martyred founding father, who immediately becomes a cherished historical figure and symbol of long-awaited change. Rumors circulate about his prison manuscripts, but four more years pass before they can be retrieved from the despot's classified documents. Finally they are published in the martyr's homeland, but by now the vast state he helped found has broken apart, even its name discarded. As new troubles spread across the land, only a few citizens any longer care about a founding father whose political creation no longer exists.

BULGAKOV WAS wrong: manuscripts do burn, and many did in Stalin's Soviet Union. Some examples are well known and especially lamented. In the bureaucratic language of an official investigation, it is reported that the last prose fiction of Boris

Pilnyak, arrested with him in 1937, "has not been preserved." Several unpublished works by Isaac Babel and the great scientist Nikolai Vavilov suffered the same fate. Not even Lenin's letters were safe, a number of important ones evidently having been destroyed along with his old comrades who had received them. But we can never know how many manuscripts, eminent correspondence, government documents, photographs, films, and even paintings perished in the bloody years from 1929 to 1953, when Stalin's regime tried to repress anything that deviated from its falsification of almost everything.

Some were lost indifferently in the crude haste of millions of arrests, searches, and confiscations; others were frantically discarded by their owners in fear of such nocturnal visits; but many more were systematically destroyed by the terror regime. From the central Lubyanka Prison in the late 1930s, "a soot-stained chimney . . . sprinkled Moscow with the ash of incinerated manuscripts." Scores of incinerators no doubt were also flaming in provincial Lubyankas throughout Russia and the other Soviet republics. Later Stalin's political police and its successor, the NKVD and KGB, destroyed masses of paper when Hitler's armies approached in 1941, again when Nikita Khrushchev's revelations threatened the *organy* in the 1950s, and once again, now shredding instead of burning, after the failed putsch against Mikhail Gorbachev in 1991.

And yet a great many forbidden manuscripts and other materials did survive Stalin's long reign of terror and its aftermath. Some were saved in secret acts of private courage—by relatives and friends of victims who took the great risk of hiding poems, letters, and photographs for decades. But most were actually "preserved forever"—as they were often stamped—by the terror apparatus itself, buried in the ever swelling archives (*vaults* seems a more fitting word) of the NKVD and of the chief terrorist, Stalin. There is no satisfactory explanation for why the "Boss," as his top henchmen called him among themselves, allowed so much incriminating evidence to be preserved—Was it his seminary education or his self-ordained role as "greatest scholar on the planet"?—but for this, if nothing else, the

nation could be grateful.

An authentic despot has the personal power to make time for what truly interests him, no matter how petty it may seem. Amid all the political, economic, and social upheavals of the Soviet 1930s, Stalin received and at least scanned an enormous volume of confiscated materials, commonly scrawling on them the instruction "Send to the archive" or, more evocatively, "Let all this 'material' lie deep in the archive." Thus did his personal papers grow year by year and decade by decade into a vast and long impenetrable repository of forbidden history and culture.

NIKOLAI IVANOVICH Bukharin was only one of Stalin's millions of victims, but his fate was special. Barely twenty-nine years old when the Bolsheviks took power, he was the youngest, most genuinely popular, and perhaps most interesting intellectual member of the Communist leadership. Lenin, with whom he had a periodically feuding but essentially sonlike relationship, called him the "golden boy of the revolution," the "favorite of the entire Party," and its "biggest theorist." Those special tributes alone were more than enough to doom him in Stalin's Terror, which swept away virtually the entire original elite of the Soviet Union.

But it was Bukharin's role in the 1920s that would make him Stalin's most important purge victim in the 1930s. In 1921, after four years of draconian political and economic measures that helped win the civil war but left the economy in ruins, Lenin introduced a fundamental change of course known as the New Economic Policy, or simply NEP, which for many citizens would be a "golden era" in Soviet history. Private enterprise and market relations were officially encouraged, especially in peasant agriculture, small-scale manufacturing, and retail trade. And while the Communist Party maintained its repressive political monopoly, it permitted much more social, intellectual, and cultural diversity than would ever again be the case until the Gorbachev years.

After Lenin's death in 1924, as his heirs on the ruling Politburo and Central Committee split into factions warring over power and

policy, Bukharin became NEP's greatest interpreter and defender. Regretting his own extremist views during the civil war, he now warned repeatedly against the abuses of power inherent in the Party's political monopoly and ideological zealotry. From 1925 to 1928 Bukharin and Stalin led the Party's pro-NEP majority against the several left oppositions headed by Leon Trotsky, Grigory Zinoviev, and Lev Kamenev. And when Stalin himself turned against NEP at the end of the 1920s, for a draconian kind of rapid industrialization based on forcing the country's 125 million peasants into state-run collective farms, Bukharin's adamant protests put him at the head of the so-called right opposition.

Even before Stalin's ruthless measures of 1929–1933 had destroyed NEP and left perhaps ten million peasants dead or enslaved in a vastly swollen Gulag of forced labor camps, Bukharin presciently understood their “monstrously one-sided” intent—and their consequences. Protesting that socialism could not be achieved through “military-feudal exploitation,” he warned that Stalin's policies were leading to “a police state.” In late 1929, as catastrophe unfolded across the land, the new Stalinist majority stripped Bukharin of all real power or influence over political events, though he remained a nominal member of the Party Central Committee and later served as editor of the government newspaper *Izvestia* until his arrest on February 27, 1937.

Bukharin was not seen again publicly until March 2, 1938, when the last and most spectacular Moscow show trial opened in a glare of international media attention. Twenty-one defendants sat in the dock, several of them prominent old Bolsheviks, but for Stalin it was the inquisition and confession of Bukharin that really mattered. As the pseudo-judicial proceedings moved toward their inexorable outcome, Stalin, through his mouthpiece-prosecutor Andrei Vyshinsky, leveled an exceptional accusation against Bukharin: “The hypocrisy and perfidy of this man exceed the most perfidious and monstrous crimes known to the history of mankind.”

For many years to come, Bukharin's trial would be an enthralling and emblematic mystery of twentieth-century politics, the subject

of philosophy and fiction: Why had he—indeed, all the illustrious old Bolsheviks put in the dock—confessed to preposterously false charges? (Not a few foolish Western observers, it might be remembered, from foreign Communists to the American ambassador in Moscow, actually believed the charges, or said they did.) Perhaps the most popular explanation, elaborated in Arthur Koestler's famous novel *Darkness at Noon*, argued that Bukharin, morally bankrupt and sincerely repentant for his past opposition, willingly confessed as a last service to Stalinism.

In fact Bukharin did not really confess, as was clear even from the edited transcript of the trial published at the time in the heavily censored Soviet press. Forced to participate in the grotesque spectacle, if only in the hope of saving his family, his tactic was to accept personal responsibility for Stalin's general indictment while denying all its specific charges: “I plead guilty to . . . the sum total of crimes committed by this counterrevolutionary organization, irrespective of whether or not I knew of, or whether or not I took a direct part in, any particular act.” Then Bukharin went on to discredit his whole “confession” (and allude to the torment being inflicted in Stalin's prisons) with a simple aside: “The confession of the accused is a medieval principle of jurisprudence.” As the trial went on, he tried to show—through double-talk, code words, evasion, and digressions—that the criminal accusations were really political falsifications and the doomed Bolsheviks actually the revolution's true leaders whose non-Stalinist conceptions of socialism were being eradicated. In his final statement Bukharin again “confessed” to the indictment but then, according to a foreign correspondent in the courtroom, “proceeded . . . to tear it to bits.”

THE SOVIET judge who formally reopened Bukharin's case files in 1988—the year Bukharin was finally exonerated at Mikhail Gorbachev's insistence—remarked, “He was a fighter to the end, despite the conditions in which he found himself.” It has always been possible to imagine those terrible conditions, but only recently have terror-era archives begun to reveal more about what hap-

pened to him during the year between his arrest and execution. Even today, however, *more*, not everything, is the correct word. Despite the opening of many former Soviet archives, access to two of the most important ones remains highly restricted and much of their historical material yet to be declassified.

The NKVD archive, which contains most of the records from the "investigation and interrogation" of Bukharin in prison, is still under the control of its Russian successor organization. Special permission is required from the ministry in order to see any of its files. Even when shown a large quantity of documents, as I have been, one cannot be sure they are complete. Probably they are not, but the archive is so vast and its history so long and secretive that not even Lubyanka's current staff seems to be certain.

The Russian Presidential Archive, where Stalin's enormous personal archive is kept, is even more inaccessible. Sometimes called the Kremlin Archive, it passed in 1991 from Gorbachev's control to Boris Yeltsin's. Some less significant holdings have been transferred to open repositories. But none of its unique remaining materials, not even remote historical ones, can be seen except on instruction of the president or his chief of staff. Nor does this zealously guarded citadel of secrets make known a list of its full holdings, though we have learned they include the original typed stenograph of Bukharin's trial with handwritten "corrections" by Stalin and his hanging judge, Vasily Ulrikh.

An unanswered question therefore often haunts surviving members of a victim's family and historians: Do missing materials confiscated during Stalin's terror still exist? Where, for example, are Bukharin's own personal papers, a large and rich collection accumulated during an extraordinary life of revolution, power, and writing? Immediately following his arrest in February 1937, NKVD men hauled away a "mountain of paper" from his Kremlin apartment, the truck "overflowing" with materials, including unpublished manuscripts, photographs, letters from Lenin, and other historical documents. None of it has ever been found.

Consider two subsequent examples. Dur-

ing his year in prison Bukharin wrote several (evidently revealing) undelivered letters to his wife; only one of them has ever been found. When his trial finally began, the proceedings were filmed on Stalin's orders by NKVD cameramen. Those reels might tell us what actually happened in the courtroom, but they have disappeared. Indeed, it is astonishing that not a single frame of film or photograph showing the faces of the defendants at this most infamous political trial of this most visual century has ever been made public.

NONETHELESS, archives have now told us more about Bukharin's fate, however grudgingly and fragmentarily, than we ever expected to learn. He spent his last year "dangling between life and death" in Stalin's top factory of false confessions, Lubyanka Prison, fully in the hands of NKVD "investigators" who were under pressing orders to "prepare" him for the trial. Bukharin immediately understood, as he wrote to Stalin from prison, that "they can do with me here anything they want." Except when taken through always dark corridors to an interrogation room, he was confined in a tiny cell harshly lit around the clock by a naked bulb, alone for months but periodically with a cell mate who was actually an informer. Interrogations usually began late at night and continued into the early morning hours.

For three full months Bukharin adamantly refused to "confess" despite prospects of physical torture, threats against his family, and shattering face-to-face confrontations with his cherished young protégés who had been brutally beaten into giving lurid testimony against him. Asked to make admissions that "contradict my whole life, my entire being," as he also wrote to Stalin, Bukharin refused "to slander myself out of fear or for other analogous reasons." But on June 1 he capitulated and began inventing "testimony," probably because he learned that the country's top military commanders had now been arrested and forced to sign statements incriminating him. If those armed and tough men could be taken and broken so quickly, there would be no way out for him. The "other analogous reasons," most fearfully the

fate of his family, became inescapable.

For the next nine months Bukharin went along with the Lubyanka inquisitioners, but haggled stubbornly over the terms of his confession. At first he tried to limit his "crimes" to a history of "theoretical mistakes" and "political opposition," but those concessions were far from what was needed. Finally he agreed to take on the part of leader of the "counter-revolutionary criminal bloc," but he continued to be vague about specific misdeeds. His tenacious recalcitrance may have been one reason why the trial was postponed at least twice. On several occasions high-level emissaries from Stalin—notably the NKVD chief, Nikolai Yezhov, and the prosecutor, Vyshinsky—came to deal personally with him. Among other things they promised he would live if he played the role well. Bukharin desperately wanted to believe them but he never really did, and repeatedly asked to be given poison, "like Socrates," instead of being shot.

Always a fragile personality—"soft" and "artistic," according to people who knew him—Bukharin was already debilitated by months of persecution and a hunger strike undertaken before his arrest. Unlike so many other victims, he seems not to have been physically tortured in prison. But all the other agonies inflicted in Lubyanka—over his family and closest friends, his impending trial, his historical reputation—were enough to leave his "soul shattered and in torment." His "grief and boundless anguish" brought on episodes of "hallucinatory delusions," even occasional loss of vision, and though he seems to have always revived, his "physical and spiritual strength [were] weakening." (There are hints he may have been given drugs.)

Those rare glimpses of Bukharin's condition in prison are from four letters he sent to Stalin from his cell between April and December 1937. Of all the documents found in archives, they are the most painful to read. Two might be interpreted simply as the pathetic pleadings of a completely broken man. Filled with lachrymose professions of "true devotion" and "enormous love" for his persecutor, along with fantasies of being freed to live under a pseudonym, they assured Stalin, "I acknowledge myself to be entirely yours" and "I would

be ready to carry out any of your demands." But the long, densely rambling letters can also be interpreted more complexly, particularly in light of other evidence that Bukharin remained "a fighter to the end," as part of a cruelly inequitable negotiation.

Throughout his imprisonment Bukharin tried desperately to "bargain" with Stalin. The Lubyanka prisoner had only one thing to offer: his willingness to satisfy Stalin's profound need for his participation in the macabre trial. The Kremlin Inquisitioner, on the other hand, had unconstrained power of life and death over Bukharin's large family, most ominously over his twenty-three-year-old wife, Anna Larina, whom Bukharin, at almost forty-six, had married three years earlier; their infant son, Yuri; and Bukharin's thirteen-year-old daughter, Svetlana, by a previous marriage. In return for going through with the trial, Bukharin wanted assurances of their well-being.

Assurances were given, but falsely. Bukharin went on trial in March 1938 without knowing that his wife and son had been taken from their Moscow apartment nine months earlier, Anna to begin a twenty-year journey through Stalin's prisons, labor camps, and Siberian exile, and Yuri a two-decade odyssey under another family name through foster homes and orphanages. Reunited only in 1956, both survived to be present at Bukharin's rehabilitation in 1988.

BUT WE now know that Bukharin was also bargaining for something else, second in importance only to his family. It, too, only Stalin could grant. A man for whom politics had always meant writing—his publications numbered in the hundreds—Bukharin wanted permission, exceedingly unusual in that place of debasement, to write in his cell: "I simply would not be able to survive here if not permitted to use paper and pen." Stalin must have interpreted the letter as Bukharin intended, "I would not be able to play my role," and gave the order. Knowing it could be reversed at any moment, the Lubyanka author tried to ensnare his captor in what he was writing. Bukharin's letters carefully apprised Stalin of his projects, even proposing he write a preface for one of them. As weeks turned into

months, and tightly handwritten pages into large manuscripts, Bukharin more and more wanted his prison writings to survive him: "*Have pity! Not on me, on the work!*"

Those writings are the most remarkable discovery of our archival investigation into Bukharin's Lubyanka fate. In barely one year, while constantly being interrogated and tormented about his family and the next ordeal that awaited him, this middle-aged intellectual, so often said to have been weak, found the moral and physical stamina to write four books (the equivalent of about fourteen hundred typewritten pages)—a study of modern politics and culture, a philosophical treatise, a thick volume of thematic poems, and an unfinished novel about his childhood in prerevolutionary Russia.

Exactly how Bukharin managed to write the manuscripts in those circumstances is left to our imagination. The only other person who probably knew was a shadowy thirty-five-year-old Lubyanka officer directly in charge of interrogating and preparing him for the trial, Captain Lazar Kogan; not long after, he, too, was arrested and shot. An educated and soft-mannered man who had begun his NKVD career specializing in intellectual cases, he must have been specially chosen for Bukharin's. Kogan was, of course, a loyal agent of the terror—he was awarded an Order of Lenin in murderous 1937—but his few surviving traces suggest a complex relationship with his famous victim during their months together in Lubyanka. Hoping to help her husband, Anna Larina was allowed to meet Kogan once and thought she saw "unspeakable remorse in his eyes." Whatever the full truth, he provided his prisoner with writing materials and books, boosted his morale, and watched the manuscripts grow.

Unless more documents are uncovered, all we can know with certainty is that Bukharin wrote mostly at night and early morning, sleeping sporadically in the harsh light that blurred his vision, working without a typewriter, sources he needed, or even a reliable supply of paper, using the backs of used sheets when he ran out. We should not be too surprised. It was the same Bukharin who then appeared at the show trial so carefully planned by Stalin

and found ways "to tear it to bits."

When Bukharin was taken to be shot, three of his prison manuscripts evidently were still in his cell, including the novel, the other having been confiscated months before. All four, along with almost everything else he wrote in Lubyanka, were sent by his jailers to the Kremlin Boss. It is not known whether Stalin read them carefully, but he certainly looked at them. He then buried them deep in his personal archive, the deepest archaeological recess of the Terror Era. They were excavated, at my initiative, fifty-four years later, in 1992. The novel was published separately in Moscow in 1994, the manuscripts on politics, culture, and philosophy, with selections from the poems, in two volumes in 1996.

THE ROLE I unexpectedly played in this saga was an outgrowth of my biography of Bukharin, first published in the United States in 1973 and eventually in the Soviet Union in 1989, and my close personal relationship with his widow and son from the time we first met surreptitiously in 1975 in pre-glasnost Moscow. While researching that book from afar, I came across vague reports that Bukharin had written some kind of manuscript in prison, as indeed he hinted at the trial, but neither I nor his family, who were still living with an official stigma, could learn anything more for many years. Only in 1988 did an aide to Gorbachev, who had read and publicly remarked on my book, tell me privately that not one but four such manuscripts existed in closed archives.

On behalf of Anna Larina, her artist son, Yuri Larin, and myself, I began asking for the manuscripts. Gorbachev, although sympathetic to the request, was already locked in a bitter political struggle with Communist Party opponents who resented his revelations about Soviet history and particularly about those kinds of "Party documents." Nonetheless, I still was optimistic in 1991 that he would soon authorize release of the manuscripts. Suddenly, however, with the end of the Soviet Union and his own office, Gorbachev no longer controlled any of the archives.

In 1992 Anna Larina, now almost eighty and ill with cancer, and I took a different ap-

proach. Believing that the Bukharin family was the legal and moral heir to his works, and had a juridical right in the "new, democratic Russia" to examine all files related to his case, she formally named me her proxy and requested that relevant archives give me full access to the materials. To our surprise, the former NKVD/KGB archive, under the Ministry of Security, responded promptly and more or less positively. My work in that storehouse of historical horrors soon began.

I quickly learned, however, that not even the top archive officials of the new Russian state could authorize access to the Presidential Archive, where the manuscripts and other essential materials were held. It could be done only by someone at the highest levels of the Yeltsin government. Nor was it a good political moment. The end of Communist rule had diminished public interest in all the Soviet founding fathers, and the new government seemed interested only in archival documents that would discredit Gorbachev and enhance its upcoming trial of the Communist Party. The prison writings of a martyred founding father embraced by the last Soviet leader served neither purpose.

Advised by a Russian friend, I identified a person who might have the power and inclination to help. In July 1992, ironically during the opening session of the Communist Party trial, I cornered one of Yeltsin's closest and most influential associates. Though not a politician with any sympathy for the Soviet founding fathers, he knew of Anna Larina through her best-selling 1988 memoir and was moved by her desire to learn everything about her husband. That person deserves our public gratitude, but I still do not feel free to name him, even though he has since left Yeltsin's side. Within a few minutes I was in his government office while he spoke on the telephone to archive administrators, and within a few weeks photocopies of the four manuscripts were in our hands. Another large batch of related materials soon followed, just before that archive's doors again slammed shut.

Thus were Bukharin's widow, son, and daughter, the historian Svetlana Gurvich, able to encounter him anew across an enormous chasm of time and suffering. For Anna Larina,

who died in 1996, there was just enough time left, with the help of family and friends, to ready her husband's last writings for publication in his homeland.

READERS OF the novel, *How It All Began*, may wonder about Bukharin's other prison manuscripts. Political in overt ways that the novel was not, they had to be written on a razor's edge between what he wanted to say—to the despot and to posterity—and the desperate plight of his family. Like his later courtroom statements they must be read on two levels, the outwardly conformist and inwardly polemical, for the non-Stalinist meanings embedded in obligatory Stalinist ritual.

Once inside Lubyanka in 1937 Bukharin was given almost no news of the outside world, but by the time of his arrest Hitler and Mussolini were in power, their military ambitions clear, and the Spanish Civil War under way. With those developments on his mind, Bukharin completed the first prison manuscript, *Socialism and Its Culture*, at an astonishing pace, evidently within four weeks of being permitted to write, mainly because it was the second part of a larger work begun before his arrest to be called *The Crisis of Capitalist Culture and Socialism*. The first volume, *The Degradation of Culture and Fascism*, was among the papers taken from his apartment and never found, but the nature of the overall project is clear. For Bukharin, "culture" meant modern civilization; fascism was its mortal crisis and socialism its only possible salvation.

Forced to stand trial as the last original Bolshevik, Bukharin was also the last great antifascist of the Soviet 1930s. Alone among Soviet leaders, he had worried about fascism as a new phenomenon and special menace ever since the early 1920s. By the mid-1930s that worry had grown into profound alarm: not only was Hitlerism in power and ever more virulent, Stalin was speaking publicly of the Nazi Führer as merely another capitalist dictator with whom he could do realpolitik business. (Bukharin no doubt knew of Stalin's secret diplomacy, already under way, that would lead to the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939.) Right up to his arrest, Bukharin used all his personal

authority to urge, in passionate articles and speeches, that the Soviet Union put itself at the head of the antifascist struggle and collective European security.

Bukharin remained loyal, even in Lubyanka, to Marxism and the Soviet Union. In addition, Stalin's modernizing goals, however brutally pursued, were his as well. But Bukharin knew, as he had made clear before his arrest, that the Stalinist regime, much like Hitler's, was growing into an "omnipotent 'total state' that de-humanizes everything except leaders and 'super-leaders.'" *Socialism and Its Culture* tried to overcome that nightmarish paradox. It argued effusively for the "humanist" potential of the Soviet system while pleading with the despot for its humanization, even a "transition to democracy," so that the nation could play its essential antifascist role. Bukharin believed deeply in those historic Soviet missions, even while knowing they were being terribly deformed under Stalin, and a final opportunity to testify on their behalf was another reason he agreed to stand trial.

Though he hoped *Socialism and Its Culture* would reach a world "at the crossroads of history," it was, in effect, a book-length policy memorandum to Stalin. Its urgent importance for Bukharin was clear from his letters to Stalin begging him to save the first volume and publish both quickly, under a pseudonym if necessary, with a preface by the Kremlin leader. (What better way to wed Stalin to Bukharin's policies?) Here, too, Bukharin failed. Seventeen months after the trial, Stalin's pact with Hitler helped unleash world war while leaving Soviet borders virtually defenseless when Nazi armies came in June 1941. But if we still honor a handful of political figures who understood the dangers of appeasement and fought it, we might add their counterpart in Lubyanka to the list.

By his seventh month in prison, September 1937, Bukharin had largely completed a second manuscript, a collection of poems of "universal scope" entitled *The Transformation of the World*. Most of the nearly two hundred poems were reflections on previous centuries—particularly their great thinkers, cultural figures, and rebels—and an epic telling of Soviet history from 1917 to the 1930s, culminat-

ing in the ongoing "struggle of two worlds," socialist humanism and fascism. In that respect, the second manuscript was an expansive poetic rendition of the first. Whatever the literary quality of the poems—expert Russian opinion is mixed—they are of compelling interest.

The poems were written during the months when Bukharin was being intensely pressured for the false testimony Stalin demanded. Composed after midnight, when he was returned to his cell from those nocturnal interrogations, they can be read as a chronicle of his emotional state and a quest for spiritual escape. Two sections of the volume, one entitled "Lyrical Intermezzo," are especially moving. Along with autobiographical themes that reappear in the novel, they express his intense love for Anna, longing for their brief life together, and yearnings to be free. For a biographer or any historian of the terror, they are an unexpected view into the soul of a condemned man.

By then Bukharin seems to have understood that he was doomed, which meant the antifascist manifesto would not be published, and to have begun thinking about his posthumous legacy. He had already started another "big" project, *Philosophical Arabesques*, now considering it the "most important thing" and his most "mature work." Even though he lacked most of the books needed for such a wide-ranging treatise (Kogan apparently gave him a few from the prison library and from his own collection), it was full of erudition and remarkably precise references. It, too, was written very quickly, because "much of it was in my head."

This third prison manuscript mattered greatly to Bukharin. In 1921 he had published a philosophical work, *Historical Materialism*, that immediately became a canon of international communism. Translated into many languages, it established him as a major Marxist thinker and the Party's "biggest theorist." Stalin could not really obliterate that reputation, but serious intellectual and political challenges to Marxism, in addition to the theory and practice of fascism, had arisen since 1921. The still proud and intellectually ambitious Lubyanka inmate wanted to respond to those challenges and complete his long-standing project of

bringing nineteenth-century Marxism fully into the twentieth century.

When *Philosophical Arabesques* was published in postcommunist Russia, an eminent Moscow philosopher noted the "illusions Bukharin shared with many Communists of that time" but emphasized his "secret polemic with Stalinism." The "tragedy of this manuscript," he continued, was in having been kept hidden for so long:

If the ideas Bukharin developed in this manuscript had been made known even in the 1950s or 1960s, they could have led to a fundamentally new Marxist philosophical vision. The kind of philosophy Bukharin outlined here was not the same as the Stalinist version of Marxism, a Marxism crucified. . . . Many themes first raised and discussed by Bukharin were new for Marxist philosophers even in the 1960s! And the people who kept this manuscript under lock and key . . . are guilty not simply of degrading Marxism, which was transformed into ideological solder, but of a barbaric attitude toward . . . culture, and not only Russian culture.

BUKHARIN FINISHED his solitary Lubyanka effort to redeem Soviet Marxism just as Stalin's regime was celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the Communist revolution, overnight on November 7–8, 1937. Five nights later he began the unfinished novel. The first seven chapters were written by mid-January 1938, when he thought the trial was about to begin and his time had run out. Another postponement, to early March, allowed him to write fifteen more.

Even the twenty-two chapters found in Stalin's archives, which take Nikolai "Kolya" Petrov (Nikolai "Kolya" Bukharin) to about age fifteen and Russia to the eve of the failed revolution of 1905, a kind of dress rehearsal for 1917, are themselves unfinished. No professional writer, which Bukharin certainly was, would consider any major work complete without revisions, even further drafts. Bukharin had neither time nor paper for such perfections. All his prison manuscripts were written not only at an astonishing pace but with almost no corrections. Misled into believing that they would be given to his family, he expected

his elderly father, a great lover of literature, to "polish the poems and the novel." When we finally retrieved the manuscripts half a century later, we decided to publish all of them unedited, if only to honor the circumstances in which he wrote them.

How It All Began was written as an autobiographical novel, but it is virtually a memoir. None of the people are invented or really disguised. In addition to the later world-famous Kolya Petrov-Bukharin, for example, four of the main characters became well known in Moscow political society after 1917: his father, Ivan; his brother, Vladimir ("Volodya"); and his first cousins, Nikolai and "Manya" Yablochkin, who were actually Nikolai and Nadezhda Lukin—he by then a prominent Bolshevik revolutionary and historian, and she Bukharin's first wife. Elderly friends and members of Bukharin's extended family who were still alive when the novel was obtained in the 1990s were amazed by how accurately he had portrayed those people.

Above all, little Kolya Petrov of the novel is fully recognizable in the legendary Nikolai Bukharin of Soviet history. The Russian Huck Finn ("Kolya's hero") with a classical education, who dismayed his mother and grandmother by already knowing "everything he's not supposed to," grew into the most iconoclastic and intellectual member of the Soviet leadership. The boy who fell in love with painting became the revolutionary who ruefully admitted having had to choose between art and politics. The impish and athletic schoolboy "monkey" was still walking on his hands and springing from trees over courtyard walls in the 1920s and 1930s, now for the amusement of an ailing Lenin and Maxim Gorky. And Kolya's childhood passion for assembling menageries wherever the family migrated remained with Bukharin everywhere he later lived, from Moscow's Hotel Metropol to the Kremlin, their abandoned denizens still running wild after his execution.

Even the writing of the novel, the only one he ever undertook, can be traced to the literary enthusiasms young Kolya inherited from his underachieving but beloved father. ("He goes out to buy sausage and comes back with a canary.") Though the most surprising of his

prison manuscripts, it is consistent with the Soviet leader who wrote extensively about literature and culture, gathered the best writers around the newspapers he edited, and repeatedly did what he could to protect three of Russia's greatest and most endangered poets—Osip Mandelstam, Boris Pasternak, and Nikolai Zabolotsky. Nor is little Kolya's raucous humor uncharacteristic of the zestful man later renowned as a Kremlin caricaturist and punster. He never stopped telling the novel's story of his hapless Latin teacher, a native Czech, who translated the proverb "Life is short; art is long" for his Russian students as "The belly is short, but the thing is long."

We might wonder how Bukharin recalled those distant childhood years in such detail after decades of political upheaval and his own wide-ranging travels and activities. His memories had been refreshed by romance earlier in the 1930s, when he, his brother, their father, and even cousin Manya/Nadezhda related their life stories to his new wife Anna. But Bukharin gives us an additional explanation in the third chapter: "Children, like grown-ups, have their superstitions, prejudices, heartfelt dreams, ideals, and unforgettable incidents in life, which are stored in the memory forever and which suddenly, at terrible or tragic moments in life, come swimming into consciousness, surprisingly vivid, in full detail, down to the wrinkles in somebody's face or a spider's web illuminated by the evening sun." Lubyanka, of course, was such a terrible and tragic moment.

We cannot be certain how far Bukharin hoped to take his story and Russia's, though clues strongly suggest that he wanted the novel to encompass or culminate in 1917. In his next-to-last prison letter to Stalin, he said it was to be a "big novel," which presumably meant in scope and content and thus including "The Great Revolution." There is also the somewhat enigmatic title Bukharin put on the manuscript, *Vremena*, whose Russian meaning suggests an unending process of time linking the past, present, and future. In the Soviet Marxist imagination, the revolution of 1917 was a kind of nexus between Russia's previous history, ongoing developments, and communist future.

Why did Bukharin choose to write about the beginning of his life at its very end? Working on a previous prison manuscript, he had assured Stalin that it "calmed me somewhat"; memories of childhood and a loving family may have eased his adult sorrows. But the contents of *How It All Began* hardly suggest that emotional escape from Lubyanka was its primary purpose. For that, he might have written exclusively about his lifelong passions for nature or art, which are secondary themes of the novel. A political man to the end, Bukharin chose autobiography as his last subject for a political reason.

By 1937 entire generations of Russian revolutionaries, Bukharin's in particular, were being massacred in Stalin's terror, their biographies and ideals criminalized in the name of their own once-sacred cause. Though isolated, Bukharin witnessed firsthand the fate of his contemporaries, having been brought face to face with childhood friends who also were being tortured into falsifying his life and their own. For his sake and theirs, he wanted to leave behind a personal testimony of how it had really been—a testament to the idealism that had led them as young students to become Marxist radicals in czarist Russia—and how, he still hoped, it might be. An unembellished memoir would have been too dangerous and less likely to survive; a novel must have seemed the safest approach and, after the strain of composing three rigorously aesopian manuscripts, the freest.

As a result, *How It All Began* was the least self-censored of Bukharin's Lubyanka manuscripts, though it, too, was laced with anti-Stalinism. Even under a pseudonym and without its specific family history, the novel could not have been published in the despot's Soviet Union. Multicolored pictures of pre-1917 Russia, sympathetic portrayals of doomed classes, and humanistic characterizations of future Leninists were already forbidden. And writers were being shot for less literary sedition than Bukharin's fleeting mirror images of Stalin's regime in its considerably paler czarist predecessor.

No NKVD censor or interrogator would have overlooked, for example, the contemporary parallels with a czar tightening "all the

screws in the terrible system of power"; with a predecessor "officialdom, the chinovniks of all varieties . . . thick-headed, arrogant, and 'patriotic,' the kind who threw the word *Yid* around contemptuously"; or with an old regime that promoted people "who seemed to have been born for police interrogation, provocation, and torture chambers" and under which the "best heads are cut off, the flower of the nation, as though by a mowing machine."

Certainly no one in Stalin's Russia would have been permitted to say, as does one of Bukharin's characters long before it actually happened, "You have transformed your party into a barracks. . . . You have killed all freedom of criticism among yourselves and you want to extend this barracks to include everything and everyone." And most Soviet readers, with their instinct for interpreting what could not be written, would have guessed that the author of such lines was somewhere in a successor to those czarist prisons where "behind thick walls, interrogations went on, uninterrupted, through the nights."

FOR TODAY'S readers, however, the importance and pleasures of *How It All Began* lie not in its polemic with Stalinism but in its intimate portrayal of Russian society and a characteristic family on the eve of a great upheaval. I am too close to the manuscript, and too lacking in literary judgment, to comment on Bukharin's achievements, but several Russian readers have already done so. The literary scholar Boris Frezinsky has praised Bukharin's "outstanding writer's memory for all of life's details," his "lush and vivid language," and his "panorama of social, political, and artistic life." The venerable children's writer and poet Valentin Berestov ranks the novel among the "best accounts of childhood in Russian literature." Other readers, including historians, single out its description of everyday existence in the empire's remote provinces, particularly Bessarabia, re-creation of the sights and smells of old Moscow, and portraits of Russia's half-

impoverished lower-middle classes, from which so many revolutionaries sprang.

Indeed, *How It All Began* may be the most authoritative firsthand account we have of how and why so many of czarist Russia's best and brightest young people had already defected on the eve of the twentieth century's most fateful revolution. It is this that Bukharin wanted us to understand—how they began to identify with the "lower orders of society," to "look at the world from the bottom up instead of from the top down," and why "this world of misery entered [their] soul forever"; how "sedition had crept" into the homes of loyal czarist parents and why boys privileged to study at an elite *gimnaziya* embraced the "gleaming weapons of Marxism." Bukharin's own story was to stand for all his boyhood contemporaries who soon would be swept into power by a revolution they so wanted and who, twenty years later, would be destroyed in its aftermath.

Bukharin probably knew that the twenty-second chapter, where the manuscript of the novel breaks off, would be his last. Reliving the death of his youngest brother three decades before, he wrote: "The sooner it's all ended, the better." But it was not yet the end of his novelistic alter ego. Immediately after sentencing Bukharin to death, Stalin demanded another humiliating ritual, a formal plea for mercy. Bukharin wrote two, on March 13 and 14, 1938, the first perfunctory but the second an elaborate profession of complete political and psychological repentance: "The former Bukharin has already died; he no longer lives on this earth. . . . Let a new, second Bukharin grow—let him even be called Petrov." Whether or not Stalin already knew the ruse, they were, of course, one and the same Kolya. He was shot the next night. ●

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Black Fundamentalism

Louis Farrakhan and the Politics of Conservative Black Nationalism

Manning Marable

OCTOBER 16, 1995, the largest public gathering of African Americans in history took place in Washington, D.C. The participants had come together under the slogan the Million Man March, with an agenda emphasizing racial pride, personal responsibility, and patriarchal family relations. Estimates of the crowd's size ranged from five hundred thousand to well over one million. The African American who initiated this demonstration had been vilified in the national media for more than a decade as racist and anti-Semitic. Yet this leader had the political insight to recognize and respond to the deep sense of social crisis within this community, the levels of rage, social alienation, and violence that were destroying an entire population of young African-American males. In a language both spiritual and visionary, he exhorted black men to transform their lives, to protect their families, to give their time and financial support to black institutions.

The Million Man March did not focus primarily on issues of public policy. The social philosophy behind its agenda was deeply conservative and pessimistic about the likelihood that whites would ever recognize or respond to blacks' grievances. With the exception of several prominent speakers such as Jesse Jackson, few addresses at the march called extensively for militant actions against the Republican-controlled Congress or the most conservative Democratic president since Woodrow Wilson. The political logic behind this was relatively clear. Reaganism, the "Contract with

America," and the growing ideological conservatism of both major parties constituted a retreat from the programs of the civil rights movement. White liberals and liberalism had virtually ceased to exist, and affirmative-action policies were widely denounced as "reverse discrimination." To most of the African-American men who responded to Farrakhan's call to Washington, it seemed that black people had little alternative but to turn inward. If white society could not be transformed democratically to include racial minorities, African Americans on their own had to employ their resources and skills for the survival and uplift of their race. In the language of an earlier racial conservative, Booker T. Washington, black folk had to "cast down their buckets where they are."

Although the great majority of African Americans had endorsed the Million Man March with varying degrees of enthusiasm, that support was by no means universal. Prominent African-American feminists such as Angela Davis and Julianne Malveaux denounced the exclusion of women from the mobilization, arguing that Farrakhan's concepts of women were patriarchal and misogynist. Lesbian- and gay-rights activists pointed to the many blatantly homophobic statements made by Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam (NOI). Many liberal elected officials, trade unionists, and civil rights leaders, who feared being identified with Farrakhan's long history of vicious anti-Semitism, refused to support the march.

Within less than a year, many of the worst fears about where Farrakhan intended to take the black movement had come to pass. In June 1994, the Reverend Benjamin Chavis, then executive secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), had initiated the National African American Leadership Summit, an effort to

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forge a united front within the black community. After Chavis was fired from his NAACP position, he became essentially a client of Farrakhan, financially and politically dependent. In 1995 and 1996, the National African American Leadership Summit's constituency became increasingly smaller and ideologically narrower. Organized labor, civil rights organizations, and elected officials largely kept their distance, because it was clear that the summit had degenerated into a front organization controlled by Farrakhan. Nevertheless, when the National African American Leadership Summit called for a national political convention at St. Louis in September 1996, at least three thousand representatives gathered to participate. On the convention's final day, the Reverend James Bevel, one of Martin Luther King Jr.'s former lieutenants and a recent convert to political conservatism, was given the podium. Bevel proudly introduced "the man of the hour," Lyndon LaRouche. Many in the audience were stunned: they immediately recognized LaRouche as a leader of fascist extremism in the United States and a defender of the former apartheid regime of South Africa. Instantly the crowd turned against Bevel and LaRouche, booing them off the stage. A fistfight erupted between several black nationalists and some of LaRouche's supporters, which was broken up by Farrakhan's security force. Throughout the country, perplexed African-American activists asked themselves why a white supremacist would be permitted to address a black political convention. Only Farrakhan could have given permission for LaRouche to speak.

What seems at first to be a curious paradox was no puzzle at all. There were significant elements in their respective ideologies that brought Farrakhan and LaRouche into agreement.

HISTORIANS OF the African-American experience have tended to emphasize black people's long struggle for equal treatment and civil rights. Although the quest for equality has always been the central feature of black activism, it was by no means universal as a response to white domination. Just as influential has been the idea of black na-

tionalism. Over the past 150 years, many black nationalist organizations have emerged, reflecting a wide spectrum of ideologies, but several core elements have been characteristic of this tradition. First and foremost was the belief that African Americans were an oppressed nation or national minority trapped inside a predominantly white society. Instead of perceiving themselves as Americans who "happened to be black," black nationalists often viewed themselves as Africans who happened to reside in the United States. The realization of critical self-awareness could be achieved only by grounding oneself in the rituals, culture, and traditions generated by and among black people. Also central to black nationalism was the insight that an oppressed people could survive in a hostile environment only if they constructed their own institutions and enterprises.

With some variations, these tenets have been the foundation of black nationalist politics from the militant emigrationism of Martin Delany in the 1850s to Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in the 1920s. For decades, many black nationalists have advocated some type of territorial separation between the races inside the United States, because they see interracial harmony as impossible.

The Garvey movement was largely responsible for transforming black nationalism into a mass protest movement with large numbers of working-class, poor, and rural supporters. Garvey's version of racial solidarity entailed an explicit rejection of liberal black intellectuals such as W. E. B. Du Bois and reformist organizations like the NAACP. Black elites who favored racial integration, from this perspective, were working against the best interests of Negroes. Blacks should not "beg" whites for social equality and acceptance but should establish their own racial standards and values for group development. It was only a short step from this Race First dogma to the argument that the only whites who were capable of honest and sincere dialogue with black people were overt racists and white supremacists. In the early 1920s, Garvey made contacts with representatives of the Anglo-Saxon Club and the White American Society, which were part

of a growing Ku Klux Klan (KKK)-oriented movement in the post-World War I period. A decade later, Garvey even identified his political accomplishments with those of European fascism, proclaiming that UNIA activists were "the first fascists."

FROM ITS founding in Detroit during the late 1920s and early 1930s, the Nation of Islam reflected most of the core themes of traditional black nationalism. This small religious sect mixed an unorthodox Islam with a patriarchal, conservative outlook on black issues and interests. Under the guidance of Elijah Muhammad, the organization grew from its marginal existence in the ghettos of Chicago and the Midwest to assume a significant voice within black America.

Theologically, the Nation of Islam taught its members that Euro-Americans were literally "devils," incapable of overcoming their racial hatred. Since no spiritual dialogue with white America was possible, African Americans had to separate themselves from its evil influences. Divine intervention would one day eliminate the sickness of white domination. Meanwhile, blacks should seek their own separate territory. An all-black state could be a protective shield, behind which African Americans could develop economic enterprises, schools, social institutions, and families. Consequently, the Nation of Islam did not seek to challenge white authorities in government or throughout American society. It minimized its involvement in politics and opposed any overt protest for desegregation and civil rights. Muhammad defined miscegenation as a type of "mongolization" that would culminate in the genetic and social destruction of the black race. African-American leaders who favored integration, such as Martin Luther King Jr., were clearly disloyal to their own people's best interests. Muhammad met with King on one occasion, but he frequently denounced the civil rights leader for encouraging African Americans "to submit to the white man and to become one of them."

Like other conservative black nationalists before him, Elijah Muhammad advocated the creation of black-owned businesses and thought them central to the collective advance-

ment of the race. In effect, the Nation of Islam preached an economic strategy of "black capitalism" strikingly similar to that championed more than a century ago by Booker T. Washington. Like the founder of the Tuskegee Institute, Muhammad believed that capitalism had no color line. Anyone with the will and energy to build an enterprise providing goods and services to his people should be rewarded. This faith in black entrepreneurship explained Washington's hostility to labor unions, socialism, and racial politics. Similarly, Muhammad was deeply opposed to communism, partly on the grounds that it was atheistic. The Nation as a whole was apathetic toward black militancy and activism inside organized labor and maintained its distance from Marxist politics of any kind. When Malcolm X caucused with Fidel Castro during the Cuban leader's visit to the United Nations in 1960, for instance, Muhammad was furious.

Given its fundamentalist orientation, it is not surprising that the Nation of Islam sought to establish relationships with white conservatives. In Chicago, the national headquarters of the Nation, Muhammad cultivated a cordial understanding with that city's powerful political boss, Richard J. Daley. Both the Daley machine and the Nation feared the rise of a black radical movement that might challenge the political status quo.

Muhammad developed even more cordial relationships with white supremacists. As mosques were organized in Atlanta, Richmond, Miami, and other southern cities, the Nation of Islam more aggressively pushed its call for a separate black territory or "homeland." The first practical step toward this objective was to establish a land base somewhere in the Deep South. This may have been the motivation for the Nation of Islam's secret dialogue with the Ku Klux Klan. On January 28, 1961, Malcolm X and Jeremiah X, the minister of the Atlanta mosque, met with leaders of the KKK. Unknown to both parties, the FBI was also present, and the agency secretly recorded the discussion. The Nation's representatives and the Klansmen shared their views on race and quickly found common ground. Malcolm X reportedly attributed "the whole [civil rights] struggle to a Jewish conspiracy

carried out by unsuspecting blacks." The two parties agreed to establish a truce, as long as the Nation continued to oppose desegregation. The Klan offered to help the Nation of Islam obtain as much as twenty thousand acres of land in either Georgia or South Carolina. Only days before his assassination four years later, Malcolm X publicly revealed his detailed negotiations with the Ku Klux Klan:

They wanted to make this land available to him so that his program of separation would sound more feasible to Negroes. . . . I sat there. I negotiated it. I listened to their offer. And I was the one who went back to Chicago and told Elijah Muhammad what they had offered. . . . From that day onward the Klan never interfered with the Black Muslim movement in the South. Jeremiah attended Klan rallies . . . they never bothered him, never touched him. . . . When the brothers in Monroe, Louisiana, were involved in trouble with the police. . . . Elijah Muhammad got old [James] Venable. Venable is the Ku Klux Klan lawyer Go back and read the paper and you'll see that Venable was the one who represented the Black Muslim movement in Louisiana.

An even more bizarre relationship developed between the Nation of Islam and the American Nazi Party, led by George Lincoln Rockwell. The Nazis, like the KKK, bitterly opposed civil rights and social equality for black people. But Rockwell viewed the racial policies of the Nation of Islam as worthy of his support. Muhammad biographer Claude Andrew Clegg III observed that Rockwell and Elijah Muhammad "exchanged correspondence and apparently worked out an agreement of mutual assistance." Both Malcolm X and Raymond Sharrieff, the supreme captain of the Fruit of Islam (the Nation's security force), privately questioned the public relationship with Rockwell and the Nazis. But Muhammad insisted that Rockwell be permitted to appear at Muslim meetings. On June 25, 1961, Rockwell and twenty others wearing Nazi uniforms attended a speech by Malcolm X in Washington, D.C. On February 25, 1962, Elijah Muhammad himself spoke publicly on "Savior's Day" at the Chicago International Amphitheatre, before an audience

that included Rockwell and other Nazi Party members. Malcolm X would later charge that there was a "conspiracy" among the Nation of Islam, the Ku Klux Klan, and the Nazis.

THE POLITICAL question here is why Elijah Muhammad sought an informal alliance with fascists and racists. In one of his last speeches, Malcolm X provided part of the answer. Through the beginning of the 1960s, he declared, "there was not a better organization among black people in this country than the Muslim movement. It was militant. It made the whole struggle of the black man in this country pick up momentum because of the unity, the militancy, the tendency to be uncompromising. All of these images created by the Muslim movement lent weight to the struggle of the black man in this country against oppression." But beginning in 1960, Elijah Muhammad began to move the organization in a new, more conservative direction. Malcolm focused his attention primarily on Muhammad's corrupt personal behavior, which he described as "more mercenary . . . more interested in wealth . . . and, yes, more interested in girls." But a more probable cause was the rapid acceleration of the black freedom movement during these years. Beginning in January 1960, desegregation protests erupted across the South. In 1961 the Congress of Racial Equality was leading "freedom rides" throughout Georgia and Alabama. Medgar Evers was at the forefront of the fight for desegregation as state leader of the NAACP in Mississippi. Hundreds of idealistic, militant young people established the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in late 1960, to campaign for civil rights and to register African-American voters. It was precisely at this historical moment that the Nation of Islam deemphasized politics, became overtly antagonistic to the civil rights movement, and grew ever more autocratic and conservative ideologically.

When Malcolm X broke from the Nation of Islam in 1964, his most bitter critic was the leader of the Nation's Boston mosque, Louis X. Louis X denounced Malcolm X as a "hypocrite" and a traitor "worthy of death." Following Malcolm's assassination, Louis X was

named to lead Harlem's Temple No. 7 mosque. Renamed Louis Farrakhan, the charismatic minister had, by the late 1960s, been appointed "national representative" of the Nation of Islam.

With the death of Elijah Muhammad in 1975, the Nation of Islam was thrown into chaos. One of Muhammad's sons, Wallace Muhammad, had sided with Malcolm X during the schism with his father; surprisingly, he emerged as the new leader. He rapidly transformed the Nation, renouncing the group's separatist ideology and bringing it into compliance with the tenets and practices of orthodox Islam. During these years Farrakhan withdrew from the reformed Islamic organization and "reestablished" the old Nation of Islam—going back to the fundamentalism of its former patriarch. Although the majority of former Nation members remained loyal to Wallace Muhammad, Farrakhan carved out his own public image as a militant spokesperson for contemporary black nationalism. In the 1984 presidential campaign of Jesse Jackson, Farrakhan's Nation of Islam provided security for the black candidate for a time. Farrakhan's articulate, charismatic style won over a new generation of black activists in the 1980s and 1990s—an ironic situation for many of them, who had been inspired by the powerful personality of the late Malcolm X.

Over the next several years, Farrakhan tried to "repackage" himself as a mainstream leader of the African-American community. Although Jackson disavowed Farrakhan's support during his 1988 presidential campaign, the Nation of Islam won praise as it involved itself in voter-registration campaigns and electoral activity. But despite these external changes, the central ideology of the Nation of Islam remained as fundamentalist and conservative as ever. Farrakhan astutely employed the radical style he had learned from Malcolm X and in subsequent encounters with Fidel Castro, Nelson Mandela, and other third world revolutionaries. But the actual content of the Nation's program was strict racial separatism, patriarchy, and extreme intolerance of any critics of the movement.

On issue after issue, Farrakhan's positions on major public policies are as reactionary as

those of Newt Gingrich. To this day, Farrakhan retains his belief in "racial purity" and opposes integration as a strategy for black advancement. He still supports in principle a separate state for all African Americans and a territorial division of the country along racial lines. On several occasions, he has expressed support for the death penalty as a punishment for many different "crimes," such as interracial sex. He has described homosexuality as "unnatural and sick." His economic philosophy, like that of Elijah Muhammad, is a version of black entrepreneurial capitalism, the political economy of Booker T. Washington.

Farrakhan's racial fundamentalism has unmistakable parallels with fascist and white racist ideologies and organizations. By the early 1980s, Farrakhan's activities and speeches had come to the attention of British fascists, who quickly embraced his program of racial separatism. The publication of the National Front, a paramilitary organization with a record of racist assaults against black people in Great Britain, praised Farrakhan as "God-sent." The National Front subsequently distributed leaflets defending the Nation of Islam's positions. Back in the United States, in the wake of the controversies surrounding Farrakhan's statements about Jews and Zionism, white American racists developed an appreciation for him as well. At the 1985 Savior's Day conference, one guest speaker was Arthur Butz, a Holocaust denier and author of *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*. Farrakhan was publicly praised by Ku Klux Klan leader Tom Metzger for his recognition that the American system was a "rotting carcass" and that the Jews were "parasites." The July 1990 issue of the *Spotlight*, the publication of the fascist, racist Liberty Lobby, featured an interview with Farrakhan, in which he remarked that "America was founded by white people for white people."

AN EVALUATION of Farrakhan's relationship with racist extremist Lyndon LaRouche requires some background information. From 1949 until his expulsion in 1966, LaRouche was an activist in the Socialist Workers Party, a Trotskyist organization. At the height of the mobilization against the Viet-

nam War, LaRouche established his own radical sect, the National Caucus of Labor Committees. Within a few short years, the LaRouche group mutated from the left to the ultra-right, embracing a fascist agenda of extreme anticommunism, racism, and anti-Semitism. In 1973 the La Rouchites initiated "Operation Mop Up," a series of violent assaults against members of the U.S. Communist Party. Armed with clubs, pipes, and other weapons, LaRouche's cult tried to disrupt public meetings and physically intimidate radical activists. Much of LaRouche's violence and hatred focused on the black movement. In 1977 he declared that African Americans who fight for equal rights are obsessed with "zoological specifications of microconstituencies' self interests" and "distinctions which would be proper to the classification of varieties of monkeys and baboons."

In these same years, LaRouche courted leaders of the Ku Klux Klan and white fascism. In 1974 his front organization, the National Democratic Policy Committee (NDPC), collaborated with racist groups in Boston to support an anti-busing candidate for Congress. The following year, the NDPC initiated a legal defense campaign on behalf of Roy Frankhouser, Grand Dragon of the Pennsylvania chapter of the Ku Klux Klan. LaRouche later provided intelligence information on the U.S. anti-apartheid movement to the apartheid regime in South Africa.

AS LAROCHE'S cult grew to perhaps one thousand dedicated members and supporters, it began an extensive involvement in electoral politics. As the NDPC's presidential candidate in the 1980 Democratic primaries, LaRouche won 185,000 votes in fifteen states and received \$526,000 in public funds from the Federal Election Commission. LaRouche's public addresses revealed a bizarre philosophy—a mixture of paranoia, racism, and right-wing ideology. For example, LaRouche insisted that Queen Elizabeth II of England was "a kingpin of the global drug traffic"; that former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and Vice President Walter Mondale were "Soviet agents"; and that David Rockefeller's "program for world reorganization

is modeled after the conceptions of Hitler's finance minister."

LaRouche's involvement in electoral politics led him to reevaluate his racist positions on civil rights and black politics in general. Perhaps he took careful note of Ronald Reagan's cultivation of a coterie of black apologists for his reactionary policies. In any case, by the mid-1980s LaRouche had concluded that his organization had to develop allies within the African-American community. The first significant step toward this goal was a rally at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., in January 1985. LaRouche front organizations sponsored the event, which was theoretically held in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday. At least five thousand African Americans attended the rally, which also featured banners in support of President Reagan's Star Wars nuclear weapons scheme: "I Have a Dream, and Build the Beam." Quietly LaRouche began to recruit dozens of African Americans into his organization and to develop close relationships with others who might benefit from his financial contributions. In the latter category was Congress of Racial Equality leader Roy Innis, who first met LaRouche in the early 1980s. In October 1984 Innis testified as a "character witness" for LaRouche in a slander suit against NBC. Innis claimed in the trial that LaRouche was neither a racist nor an anti-Semite and that "the composition of his organization indicates to me that he's not a racist." LaRouche's prize recruit, however, was the Reverend James Bevel, the former aide to King.

The mainstream leadership of the black community was not fooled by LaRouche's new tactics. In the *Atlanta Voice* of April 12–18, 1986, the A. Philip Randolph Institute declared: "LaRouche appeals to fear, hatred and ignorance. He seeks to exploit and exacerbate the anxieties and frustrations of Americans by offering an array of scapegoats and enemies—Jews, Zionists, international bankers, blacks, labor unions—much the way Hitler did in Germany." In 1985 African-American leader Julian Bond accused LaRouche of "using the elderly and the politically unsophisticated to promote his brand of right-wing totalitarianism, his alliance with Nazis and the Klan, his

support for the white supremacists in South Africa, and for President Reagan's 'Star Wars' Program." One of LaRouche's sharpest and most perceptive black critics was the Reverend Benjamin Chavis, at that time executive director of the United Church of Christ's Commission on Racial Justice. In a nationally syndicated column, in August 1986, Chavis sharply denounced "LaRouche and his band of fanatics" for attempting "to win black recruits." LaRouche's front organizations have played upon "the black community's fear of the growing drug problem and the AIDS epidemic. They have gotten black recruits with their strong anti-drug line and their suggestion that all AIDS victims be quarantined." Chavis warned African Americans that the "LaRouche organization is clearly racist, works closely with the Klan, and is a supporter of the South African government as well. . . . It is trying, through its many tentacles, to infiltrate the black community."

LAROCHE'S empire was seriously threatened when in 1989 he and six of his top aides were convicted of federal fraud and tax evasion charges, receiving prison sentences of up to fifteen years. It was during the federal government's successful prosecution of LaRouche that the organization accelerated its efforts to cultivate friends and allies among black Americans. From his prison cell, LaRouche launched his 1992 presidential campaign by selecting the Reverend James Bevel as his running mate. A surprising number of African American leaders endorsed the campaign; among the most prominent were the Reverend Hosea Williams, field director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and county commissioner of De Kalb County, Georgia, and Amelia Boynton Robinson, a civil rights movement veteran and a 1990 recipient of the Martin Luther King Jr. Freedom Medal. In the LaRouche newspaper the *New Federalist*, African-American supporters of LaRouche stated: "It is time to secure the victories of the civil rights movement that was led by Dr. Martin Luther King, and guarantee the economic and moral future of our posterity. For these reasons we hereby endorse the LaRouche-Bevel candidacy, and encourage all citizens to join our

new movement and vote LaRouche-Bevel on Nov. 3." The endorsers of this statement included Joseph Dickson, publisher of the *Birmingham World* newspaper; the Reverend Floyd Rose, former editor of the *Macon Reporter*; and Mattie Harkness, former president of the Pickens County, Alabama, chapter of the NAACP.

LaRouche's publications began to make favorable references to Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam. The Nation gradually reciprocated, citing data generated by LaRouche's research for its own publications. According to the *New Federalist* of September 28, 1990, Dr. Abdul Alim Muhammad, a Nation spokesman, told a meeting of La Rouchites: "I want to say on behalf of Minister Louis Farrakhan and the entire Nation of Islam, how much we admire you and respect you for the great work that you are doing." The NOI publication the *Final Call* of December 24, 1990, reported that Dr. Muhammad spoke in Paris at an international conference sponsored by the Schiller Institute, a LaRouche front organization. In the next few years, the Nation of Is-

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Subordination
..
Empowerment?

SUBORDINATION OR EMPOWERMENT?

African-American Leadership and the Struggle for Urban Political Power

RICHARD A. KEISER

Why have Blacks won political empowerment in some cities and in others remained subordinated or had their achievements rolled back? Why do some cities have many Black leaders with multi-racial appeal while other cities have none? *Subordination or Empowerment* answers these questions through detailed historical examinations of the Black struggle for political power in Chicago, Gary, Philadelphia, and Atlanta. Keiser argues that electoral competition among White factions has created opportunities for Black leaders to win genuine political empowerment and avoid subordination. When electoral competition among Whites does not exist, Black votes lose their electoral leverage, leading to the rise of extra-electoral strategies. Keiser's dynamic theory of leadership formation explains the current appeal of Black separatism and messianism at the local and national levels and the consequent rise of leaders such as Louis Farrakhan, and offers a rejoinder to Cornel West's critique of Black leadership in *Race Matters*.

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lam and the Schiller Institute collaborated in public forums at Howard University and the University of the District of Columbia. In 1994, following Chavis's ouster as head of the NAACP, representatives of the Nation of Islam once again joined forces with the La Rouchites. On September 1, 1994, the Schiller Institute organized and paid for a public forum in Washington. It featured Dr. Muhammad, who accused the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith of "engineering" Chavis's removal.

When LaRouche was paroled from federal prison in 1994, his organization moved aggressively to deepen its extensive relationship with the Nation. After the Million Man March, Bevel began working closely with Farrakhan's representatives and with Chavis. On the first anniversary of the march, 50,000 to 100,000 people gathered before the United Nations to mark the "World Day of Atonement." According to the *New Federalist*, the demonstration's major themes were "Atonement, Reconciliation, and Responsibility" and were "jointly agreed upon by the rally leaders," Farrakhan, Chavis, and Bevel. The rally's keynote address was delivered by Farrakhan, who spoke for nearly three hours.

It was supremely ironic that Chavis, who had so clearly comprehended the dangers of

LaRouche's fascist and racist politics a decade earlier, became politically and financially dependent upon the LaRouche-Farrakhan liaison. Chavis's personal tragedy symbolizes the political contradictions of black fundamentalist nationalism: its autocratic character, its conservative economic ideology, and its active collaboration with white supremacy and fascism. The dangerous connections between Farrakhan and LaRouche only repeat the historical pattern of Garvey's associations with white racists in the 1920s and Elijah Muhammad's relationship with the Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan a generation later. Perhaps the greatest tragedy of all is that the vast majority of African Americans are still unaware that some of their most prominent leaders have betrayed their interests by consorting with those who oppose their very existence as a people. In 1985, Julian Bond suggested that if LaRouche's efforts to expand his influence among blacks were successful, "a section of black America will have become allied with its own worst enemy." Bond's prediction proved to be all too true. ●

MANNING MARABLE is director of the Institute for Research on African American studies at Columbia University. His latest book is *Black Leadership*.

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The Left's Wrong Turn

Why Economic Nationalism Won't Work

Jay Mandle

NO LONGER is the ability to produce goods and services in large volume confined to a handful of countries. We live in an era in which economic development has spread globally. With this heightened productive capacity, many poor countries have become exporters of manufactured goods to the lucrative markets of the developed world. And, as exporters, they have been able to fuel their own growth.

American liberalism's and the left's reaction to the increase in imports from poor countries has been to turn self-protectively inward. The refusal of congressional Democrats to grant the Clinton administration fast-track authority in negotiating trade agreements made the nature of this response dramatically clear. In their hostility to trade, the members of Congress who aligned themselves with Representative Richard Gephardt in opposition to the White House were in accord with prominent liberal analysts such as Michael Lind, Jeff Faux, Robert Scott, Robert Kuttner, and Thea Lee. All advocate the introduction of tariffs and other restrictions on the globalization of economic activity.

What underlies the new nationalist tinge to American liberalism is the conviction that in economic relations with poor countries, U.S. workers are put at risk. Particularly with regard to wages, but also with regard to environmental, health, and safety issues, the argument is that globalization—understood to be the ability of poor countries to export goods to the developed world and of capitalists to choose freely where to invest—undermines gains that have been achieved in this country. With capital ever more mobile, the left is convinced that it will flee the United States and

relocate where wages, safety, and environmental standards are lower. In the process we will be swamped with low-cost imports produced with inexpensive third world labor working in unhealthy and environmentally destructive conditions. American jobs will be lost, wages bid down, and environmental and safety standards undermined. In order to avoid this outcome, nationalist liberals argue that trade should be withheld from third world countries like Mexico until labor, environmental, and safety conditions are improved.

The standard response by economists to the concern that trade with poor countries drives down wage rates in the developed world has been to emphasize that, overall, trade benefits all participating nations, allowing them to expand their output in the products they manufacture relatively efficiently. In the meantime, they can buy from abroad commodities of which they are relatively inefficient producers. That means that total production will be greater than in the absence of trade; the result is an increase in global productive efficiency. If there is a downward pressure on wages, they argue, it is relatively small and easily compensated for by the additional wealth.

THIS RESPONSE is inadequate. Liberals are right to emphasize that globalization creates important problems for a rich country like the United States. This is because of the way the benefits and costs of increasing international trade are distributed. Producers of commodities using highly skilled labor benefit as export markets open. So, too, do consumers who are able to buy goods at lower prices than would prevail in the absence of trade. Adrian Wood estimates that those same goods, if produced in the developed countries, would cost three times as much as imports. But domestic industries that compete with

imports from poor countries are put under pressure. In this regard, Alan Tonelson writes that "most of the industries that paid decent wages to American workers without world-class skills and education—such as apparel, textiles and steel—have been decimated by foreign competition and the inadequate response of United States trade policy." So the demand for poorly skilled workers tends to decline. With that fall in demand comes a corresponding tendency for wages to fall.

The impact of trade with poor countries tends to produce, therefore, diametrically opposite effects, depending upon the position of individuals and groups in the social structure. Without an effort at correcting the skewed distribution of gains and losses, trade with poor countries helps the advantaged and harms the disadvantaged. There is a legitimate debate among economists concerning the magnitudes involved. But the general pattern is clear. Trade with poor countries has tended to deepen the already profound class fissures in this society. This is the context in which to understand Tonelson's warning that "precisely because its effects are distributed in such a wildly uneven, frequently shifting manner, globalization raises serious questions about America's future as a cohesive successful society—about American nationhood itself. . . globalization could represent the greatest challenge to national unity since the Civil War."

In principle the damage done to limited-skill workers could be ameliorated. A political coalition could emerge that would seek to protect the benefits produced by trade with poor countries but that would also acknowledge that it is not fair to impose the costs exclusively on poorly educated workers. Such a coalition would call for progressive social policies, to be financed by the affluent beneficiaries of trade, to protect the well-being of the poor and working poor. Attention would be directed to education, public-sector employment, and income transfers. The efficiencies associated with globalization would continue; the inequalities would be mitigated.

Advocacy of such an approach has not been the principle strategy adopted by the U.S. left. Instead, the left's answer is to punish the underdeveloped world. And though the

left dislikes being described as protectionist, that nevertheless is the term that best characterizes its position on these issues. Thus Michael Lind advocates what he calls a "social tariff," equal to the difference between the wages in the United States and those of the third world trading partner. The imposition of such a tariff, writes Lind, would discourage U.S. businesses from investing in poor countries. Robert E. Scott advocates imposing global quotas on imports such as automotive and electronic products and denying to Japan and all export-oriented developing countries most-favored trading status in the United States. Finally, Jeff Faux argues that "Democrats should stand for denying access to U.S. markets to countries like China"—where unions do not have the right to organize—that lack effective standards concerning health, safety, and child-labor laws.

THIS RESPONSE is a disaster both internationally and domestically. Even if the liberal agenda with regard to trade were implemented it would not achieve its international objectives. In all likelihood the left's program of tariffs and sanctions would delay, not accelerate, the improvement of working conditions in the third world. Equally importantly, the hostile liberal reaction to trade means that an opportunity to create a politics directed toward reducing class inequality in this country is being lost. Globalization provides a moment when it can be argued that we need not choose between fairness and well-being. The left can and should defend the wealth-enhancing qualities of trade and at the same time argue for greater equality in the distribution of its benefits. But it misses its chance when it becomes protectionist.

Obviously, if poor nations lacked the capacity to produce goods for export, as has been the case in the past, anxieties concerning their impact on the U.S. labor market would be nonexistent. Trade relations with poor countries have become a sensitive issue only because the latter have increased their productive capability, particularly in the manufacture of products using relatively unskilled labor, to a level at which they can compete successfully in metropolitan markets. An essential element of

their success—their comparative advantage—is that their wage rates are far below those in the metropolitan countries. Because of that, industries such as textiles and footwear, where the use of numerous relatively unskilled workers remains essential in production, have far lower costs of production in countries like China or Indonesia than could be possible in the developed world.

Thus it is that a liberal nationalist like Lind has no problem with trade among already developed nations, but balks at trade with poor countries. His position is illustrative of many on the nationalist left. He writes that “as a general rule . . . free trade should be encouraged between high-wage countries but trade between high and low-wage countries should be regulated in order to prevent mobile transnational corporations from using the poverty of available workers in the latter to drive down wage and benefit levels in the former.”

SCOTT AND FAUX place their protectionist recommendations in a more benign context than Lind. They want the United States to take the lead with regard to workers' rights and environmental protection. Protection will be imposed only if standards are not met. But in this it is hard to avoid recognizing what the Columbia University economist Jagdish Bhagwati characterizes as “intrusionism.” That is, the developing countries are asked to adopt labor, environmental, or safety standards equal to or in excess of those adhered to by the developed countries. As Bhagwati puts it, the positions advanced by authors like Faux and Scott, and to some degree even by the Clinton administration itself, “have weakened the moral agenda . . . by selectively tilting it against the poor nations and shielding the rich nations.” As if to illustrate the point, Faux, in the same paragraph in which he calls for trade sanctions against China in response to that country's labor standards, briefly alludes to the fact that the United States has not yet signed the agreement on that subject proposed by the International Labor Organization. The same kind of double standard exists with regard to environmental concerns. Here, the United States is called upon to insist that poor countries meet strin-

gent standards while it remains by far the country that contributes most to environmental degradation. Bhagwati also suggests it is unclear how the United States could take the lead against sweatshops and for the rights of migrant workers, when the former are “rampant in our garment manufacture” while the latter “are often subject to abject abuse here.”

IN ANY case it is hard to see how left protectionism is anything else but an exercise in futility. Almost certainly, for example, this is true of its attempt to encourage union organization as a means of raising wage rates in poor countries. The goal of this strategy is to relax the pressure on unskilled labor in the United States. But rising wages occur in a context in which increased labor productivity is joined with increasing employment opportunities. No realistic level of union organization is likely to offset the resistance of profit-seeking businesses to increasing wages when either of these two is absent. If output per worker is not growing, businesses will find it unprofitable to raise wages without cutting back on employment. And if labor's alternatives are narrow and limited, such businesses will not find it necessary to bid up wage rates in order to attract a needed labor supply. This is not to say that union organizing is unattractive or undesirable. But the fact is that unions, too, operate in a labor market, and it is entirely unrealistic to expect that labor-management negotiations will over the long run be able to escape its constraints. Whether in poor countries or developed ones, negotiations will result in increased income for workers only if labor becomes increasingly valuable to management because of advances in its productivity—while at the same time workers have available to them competing employment opportunities. And that requires the economic growth produced by free trade.

What this suggests is that left protectionism is perverse to its own goal of raising workers' wages in poor countries. Shutting off access to the U.S. market would surely reduce the market demand for products manufactured in the developed world. Doing that would reduce profit opportunities for businesses there, which in turn would slow the rate

of investment. Employment growth would be curtailed, while the decline in the purchase of new buildings and equipment would reduce the rate of labor-productivity growth. In sum, the left's policies would be more likely to raise unemployment and reduce productivity growth than to enhance the conditions in which wages would rise.

The same general logic applies to health, safety, and environmental standards. It is true that deplorable conditions prevail in the manufacturing and assembly sectors and in urban areas of the developing world. But with the United States dragging its feet in international negotiations over environmental emissions, and providing very little financial assistance to efforts to overcome environmental destruction, economic growth becomes the only means by which poor countries can obtain the resources necessary to address these critical problems. Part of the environmental movement hopes that the poor countries of the world will turn their backs on modernization and in that way the pressure on the globe's ecology will be alleviated. But if, as seems likely, that hope is unrealistic and economic modernization proceeds, the avoidance of damaging environmental outcomes is going to be very expensive. New technologies are urgently required if the consequences of economic development are to be made consistent with environmental sustainability. It is hard to see how the underdeveloped world could move more vigorously in this direction in straitened economic circumstances than in buoyant ones.

FINALLY, BY making a fetish out of trade, the left loses an opportunity to substantiate their claim that they stand for the well-being of the whole country and not just for a special interest. If the left is ever to be taken seriously, it must clearly stake out its intention to lead on behalf of the whole society, not just its own constituency. In that regard,

the left will have to take into account the interests of consumers as well as workers. For the impact of trade is to raise income and well-being by permitting a wider array of goods to be made available at lower prices than would otherwise prevail. It is very noticeable that liberal trade theorists who advocate tariffs never spell out what the costs of those tariffs will be. But it is hard to believe that consumers of electronic equipment or automobiles are unaware that tariffs on imports from Asia will have an impact on their standard of living.

The financial crises currently enveloping the fast-growing countries of Asia suggest that the course of economic modernization will not be an easy or uninterrupted one. But economic development has never proceeded evenly. Throughout the last two centuries, development has been faced with abrupt and protracted setbacks. Without therefore denying the importance or severity of the dramatic events unfolding in Asia today, the fact remains that these countries have in place the fundamental requisites of development: managerial access to the stock of technical knowledge essential for successful participation in the international economy and a sufficiently well-educated and trained labor force able to produce goods of high enough quality to be marketable in the developed world. Despite current difficulties, poverty-reducing growth, over the long run, remains both feasible and likely.

Much of the burden of globalization will, therefore, continue to fall on the developed world. It is true that with free trade, unskilled workers in the United States are put at risk. But the solution to the problem is not to resist the economic growth of the third world or to pretend that it does not exist. It does and will continue to exist, and so long as it does it will create problems for those in the United States who lack access to education and high-paying jobs. That should provide fertile soil for a politics that realistically addresses the interests of the disadvantaged. It should be the left's role to identify those interests, while at the same time speaking in the national interest. Savaging trade is no way to do either. ●

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Jeff Faux Replies

JAY MANDLE devotes most of his argument to setting up a straw man—the notion that those of us who have opposed Washington's corporate-driven global economic policies are "protectionists," ignorant of the textbook benefits of expanded trade, or else people with a monstrous agenda "to punish the underdeveloped world." The first charge is simplistic, the second is absurd. To be sure, some opponents of the president's bill to renew his fast-track authority were protectionists, just as some of its supporters were sweatshop operators. But the rejection of fast-track was not a rejection of the principle of comparative advantage. The bulk of those members of Congress who voted against the proposal understand that we buy and sell on a small, increasingly integrated planet. Rather, it was a rejection of the specifics of the trade and investment strategy that the last three presidential administrations have been pursuing—a strategy that protects the interests of multinational investors and leaves working people in all countries to the mercies of unregulated capital.

Markets do not exist in nature. They are defined by sets of rules. It took a century of struggle in the United States to develop a set of rules that defended people and communities from the excesses of a continental capitalism. These rules included protections for labor, the environment, and the public health. They also included institutions and policies to dampen the volatility of the business cycle. As communication and transportation technology expands markets beyond national borders, sensible people are asking: what are the rules for the global economy?

That question—not the stale and abstract squabble over theories of free trade and protectionism—is the heart of the real-world debate. For example, the defeat of fast-track, which Mandle laments but does not analyze, was primarily a reaction to the experience of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which the majority of the U.S. Congress had voted for in 1993. Members of Congress learned at least two lessons from that

experience. First, they learned that the agreement weakened the bargaining position of labor in all three countries. NAFTA was sold as a "free-trade" agreement, but it was not. If the leaders of the United States, Canada, and Mexico wanted simply to lower tariffs, the agreement could have been written on one page. Instead, it is one *thousand* pages of detailed rules, most of which are aimed at protecting the interests of U.S. and Canadian investors seeking cheap Mexican labor. Intellectual property rights for corporations, repatriation of capital, and deregulation of foreign business are not only spelled out, specific punishments and penalties are described. In contrast, the protections for labor and the environment—core elements in any modern social contract—are for all practical purposes nonexistent, relegated to toothless language in unenforceable "side agreements."

The second lesson of NAFTA was that the free-trade homilies of Economics 101—which provided the multinational business lobby with intellectual authority—did not describe the way the world actually worked. Within a year after NAFTA went into effect, the promises of accelerated Mexican growth, rising wages, the emergence of a prosperous middle class, and a reformed democratic government turned to ashes. Driven in large part by the hype of NAFTA, Mexico's economy had swelled with infusions of short-term speculative capital. Inevitably the bubble burst, throwing two million Mexicans out on the street, bankrupting twenty-eight thousand small businesses and decimating the middle class. Social and political disorder followed, including drug-related corruption at the highest levels of government and the army.

The subsequent bailout of the Mexican economy by the U.S. Treasury and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) protected those who had invested in Mexican bonds. It also added to the country's already heavy foreign debt burden, forcing it to redouble its efforts to export its way out of austerity. Since the United States takes 85 percent of Mexico's exports, a flood of imports followed, resulting

in a loss of American jobs and downward pressure on wages.

THERE WAS plenty of room for debate on what happened in Mexico and why. But, like Professor Mandle, the administration and its corporate allies were uninterested. Instead, Bill Clinton announced his intention to expand NAFTA to the rest of the Western Hemisphere and demanded a renewal of his fast-track authority to do it. Anyone opposed was, à la Professor Mandle, a mean-spirited "protectionist." The result should not have surprised anyone.

The overwhelming majority of Democrats who voted no, including the maligned Congressman Gephardt, were not against more trade with the rest of the Western Hemisphere. They wanted trade agreements redesigned to give labor and environmental rights parity with the protection of capital. Mandle, citing Jagdish Bhagwati, misstates this position, saying that the left is asking that developing countries have standards "equal to or in excess of those adhered to by the developed countries." He then goes on to demonstrate this by citing my own criticism of the United States for not signing all of the International Labor Organization protocols. Mandle tops his case off with an unearned moral posturing against "intrusionism" into the affairs of poor nations.

It is hard to imagine a more uninformed line of reasoning. First, no serious advocate of international labor protections would apply first world labor standards to third world countries. The literature and the debate make a clear distinction between fundamental human *rights*—such as the right to bargain collectively, which should apply to all—and *standards*, such as a minimum wage or hours of work, which should be scaled to the capacity of the economy to support them. Second, the notion that such rules represent unacceptable "intrusion" on the sovereignty of third world countries is disingenuous. In the context of "free trade" agreements, the leaders of almost all third world countries have handed over much of their economic sovereignty to the interests of multinational capital as promoted by the policies of the major international institutions, such as the IMF, the World Bank, and the U.S.

Treasury. Mexico, for example, was stripped by NAFTA of its ability to control the flow of capital in and out of the country. Why is it acceptable for third world nations to be told that in exchange for access to American markets they must privatize, deregulate, and impose U.S. standards for the protection of capitalists' assets, but not that they must treat their workers as human beings?

Third, my criticism of the United States for not approving International Labor Organization principles reflects my view that the struggle for labor rights in other nations is not separate from the struggle for the rights of labor in our own country. Ironically, for all his professed internationalism, Mandle's argument is stuck in nation-state categories. The plot in his global economic drama is limited to rich countries and poor countries. He completely misses the way in which the emerging global marketplace is an economic battleground for class interests—between rich and poor, capital and labor, and despoilers and protectors of the environment—that spill over national borders. Today, the rules of the global economy are set by those who represent capital in all countries in order to maximize their advantage over labor. Multinational corporate and financial networks are systems that tie together political and business elites from all over the world. For a visual demonstration of this, Mandle need only observe the next meeting of the IMF and watch the finance and economic ministers of developing countries being wined, dined, and shuttled around in limousines provided by the world's largest banks and corporations.

The mistake that Mandle and Bhagwati make is to assume that poor countries are run for the benefit of poor people. But a major reason poor countries are poor is the way in which they have been ruled. In what sense is the resistance of the rulers of China, Guatemala, or Indonesia to labor standards in their countries morally superior to those who want to curb their regimes' ability to suppress wages and routinely beat, jail, and even kill workers who protest?

Mandle's failure to take his own professions of support for internationalism seriously leads him to a compartmentalized morality in

which the concern for social justice must stop at the border. He concedes that American liberals are right to emphasize that globalization creates important problems for the United States. He tells us the policy answer is to have the affluent beneficiaries of trade taxed to help the poor and near poor with education, public-sector employment, and income transfers. He then censures the liberal left for abandoning the domestic struggle against inequality.

His argument is historically incorrect. For example, it has not been the left of the Democratic Party that has betrayed America's poor and near poor, it has been the center-right promoters of Wall Street's vision of global laissez-faire. I cannot speak for the other "left nationalists," but as someone who has spent most of his life working for a progressive domestic agenda, I find Mandle's comments on this issue offensive. Excuse me, but I rarely see Professor Bhagwati or other champions of unregulated trade on the intellectual or political barricades fighting for programs to provide the poor and near poor with "education, public-sector employment, and income transfers." As a matter of fact, I am more likely than not to meet the same opponents carrying the same corporate water, opposing the social contract here *and* abroad.

Finally, when Mandle sets up a straw man, he should make sure that he knocks it down. In this case, he swings at the effigy of protectionism by telling us that wages have nothing to do with unions or institutions but depend exclusively on productivity and growth, which

he asserts is a result of increased trade.

Productivity obviously does set a constraint on wages. But the range of possibilities in the distribution of the benefits of productivity between capital and labor are much greater than Mandle asserts. Thus, over the last quarter century of the globalizing of the American economy, productivity has risen about 25 percent, while the median compensation of the American worker has fallen. And in the *maquiladora* factories along the U.S.-Mexican border, where independent labor unions are suppressed, output per hour is often at or near U.S. levels while wages are one-tenth or less.

As for the effect of free trade on growth, it continues to be vastly overstated in the economists' catechism. As I pointed out in my review of Dani Rodrik's book on globalization in the Fall 1997 issue of this magazine, economists have not been able to ascribe more than a small portion of postwar economic growth to trade liberalization. Indeed, during the last two decades of accelerating U.S. exports, America's economic growth has slowed down. As Rodrik, himself a distinguished free-trade economist, ruefully admits, the notion that international trade has been a major contributor to growth rests on faith.

These are complicated questions and there is room for honest argument. But Professor Mandle chooses instead to drag out the old "protectionist" canard, which is a signal that he would rather stop the discussion than contribute to it.

Fortunately, there are signs that the epithet is losing its sting. The defeat of fast-track last fall and the current Asia crisis are finally moving the policy debate—in the media, among policy elites, and even among some in the universities—slowly toward the question of the rules for the management of the global economy. Serious people on both sides of the question have moved beyond Professor Mandle's "protectionists vs. free traders" soap opera. ●

JEFF FAUX is president of the Economic Policy Institute. His latest book is *The Party's Not Over*.

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The Left and Markets

H. Brand

IN HIS article "Markets and Social Pain" (*Dissent*, Winter 1998), James B. Rule argues that market ideology "poses a historic challenge to the kind of thinking we do in *Dissent*." He observes that no question is currently more important for the left than the "press of market thinking in all areas of public life." And he asks what principles should govern the left's efforts to "resolve the tensions between prospective market efficiencies and the divisive inegalitarian consequences that markets may bring." But he cannot, perhaps does not wish to, formulate any of those principles, offering instead a "seat-of-the-pants" approach, weighing the "virtues and vices of specific market arrangements." This approach follows from what I take to be his rejection of any attempt to formulate an overall concept of the market as being too abstract. So he fragments the market into specific arrangements; this, however, prevents him from defining adequately the "market ideology" confronted by the left. The problem is that this ideology is a coherent system of thought, embodying a politically legitimating purpose.

Let us first look at a few instances of the market arrangements Rule would ameliorate. He would reduce the cost of medical care by lifting restrictions to entry and creating "authentic competition." He has nothing to say about the rampant commercialization of health care or the degradation of physicians' autonomy that this has entailed. Yet it is "market ideology" that has fostered such commercialization.

True, Rule differentiates between markets in which efficiency increases consumer choice and markets in which "efficiency" conceals abdication of social responsibility. Privatization

of some social functions may indeed entail such abdication; Rule, bless him, would resist privatizing the judiciary, even though this would make for efficiency and even profitability. In grappling with the criteria that might make privatization desirable or not, Rule misses the broader issue. The drive to privatize public functions, which began in earnest under Ronald Reagan's administration, is one facet of a deliberate effort to diminish the reach and authority of government and to downgrade the status of civil-service employees. It is also part of the seemingly irresistible penetration of the market into fields, private and public, previously shielded from it. With few exceptions, privatization shifts public functions to firms not otherwise accountable to the electorate.

RULE BELIEVES that in order to keep economic life "dynamic," a certain amount of "creative destruction" (the term is Joseph Schumpeter's) is necessary. Individuals affected by this should receive various kinds of social support, including retraining. I find this a singularly thoughtless statement coming from someone on the left. The introduction of labor-saving technologies is usually presided over by powerful private concerns, which base their decisions on profitability and cost-saving criteria, without regard to social or human consequences. Unions like the United Auto Workers, which do not in principle object to productivity improvement, have argued for decades that there needs to be a system of advance warning when it comes to the impact of technological change on employment. The mass layoffs of the 1980s finally led to legislation mandating advance notice of plant shut-downs (the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification [WARN] Act). Despite its limited character and weak provisions for implementation, business opposed it furiously. The

act was also intended to ameliorate the social costs of plant closings on communities. Thousands of such closings have occurred, but in most cases workers have been stranded without retraining or job search possibilities; communities have suffered economic losses that an effective system of advance notification might have cushioned. Annual surveys by the Department of Labor have documented the large-scale dislocation of workers, a substantial proportion of whom cannot find reemployment or, when finding it, must accept lower pay.

Rule wants to address these matters on the individual level rather than that of the downsizing or relocating firms, but this is hardly persuasive when one looks at the results. "Creative destruction" may be good for Wall Street, but it is a sickness unto the affected worker. If we cannot think of fruitful alternatives to retraining fifty-year-old workers who have spent thirty years of their lives in a steel mill silenced by imports or technology, we should not call ourselves partisans of the left.

Rule is, of course, right to reject the worldview of the Chicago School of economists. For them—I'm being only a little unfair—all the world's a market, filled with consumers and producers yearning to be free of government regulation. The Chicago School was surely instrumental in constructing what R.J. Peritz (in his *Competition Policy in America, 1888–1992*) terms the "unifying image" of the 1980s: the free market subject to corporate control, providing "unbounded legitimation . . . to Reagan administration policies [by its] rhetoric of efficiency, consumer welfare, and free competition." Official concern with market power diminished; official concern with corporate concentration disappeared. The world might be "a perfectly satisfactory place if there were only one hundred companies," President Reagan's antitrust chief, William Baxter, said, and "an industry trend toward concentration is not a factor that will be considered." Of ten thousand merger notifications filed with the antitrust division of the Justice Department during the Reagan administration, only twenty-eight were challenged. The trend toward consolidation did not mod-

erate during the 1990s; lately it is particularly pronounced in banking and telecommunications. Whatever the reasons, consolidation has obviously broadened corporate control of assets and markets. The relevant statistics do not provide evidence of increased "efficiency." Output of all persons engaged in nonfarm business slowed from an annual average rise of 2.8 percent during 1960–1973 to 1.1 percent between 1973 and 1990 and 0.9 percent between 1990 and 1996. (See the *Economic Report of the President*, February 1997.)

There is one aspect of "market arrangements" Rule doesn't discuss, and that is the labor market. The Chicago School and its allies have revived the fiction that there is equality between employer and employee in labor contracts. This amounts to a dismissal of collective rights defended by the unions and tends to legitimate their repression. The agency of repression has been corporate control of free markets—which has meant, first and foremost, in Peritz's words, "the subjugation of labor unions." How this is practiced has often been discussed in *Dissent's* pages, and need not be detailed here. The weakening of the unions, initiated by Reagan's breaking of the air traffic controllers' strike in 1981, has been a major factor in the decline of the wages of lower-skilled workers, and thus in forestalling labor cost increases. Rule does note the problem of lower-skilled workers, but he fails to examine the institutional issues.

LET US assume that the labor market can be subjected to "efficiency" like commodity markets. What is the yardstick for this efficiency? I have already mentioned one yardstick, an indirect one to be sure: the control of labor cost by reducing the bargaining power of workers. Weakening trade unions is not the only way of doing this. Technological displacement can do it; relocating or threatening to relocate a plant does it; insecurity engendered by widespread dismissals does it; and, at a more broadly effective level, the pursuit of anti-inflationary monetary policy does it. Market ideology has affected labor market policy to an amazing degree since the mid-1970s. Witness the resistance to raising the minimum wage; witness the Earned Income

Tax Credit and the low wage levels it helps make possible; witness the reduction and in most instances the virtual elimination of aid to the poor, forcing them to accept low-wage jobs; witness judicial tolerance of hiring replacements for striking workers. The labor market lies at the core of the economy. Rule may not regard it as a market in the conventional sense of the word, and he might be right. Unfortunately market criteria are applied to it by business, government, and academia and, perverse as it seems, market ideology pervades these criteria.

The market in modern capitalism is the instrument of corporate domination, and it is protected by well-defined and stringently en-

forced property rights. Rule may not believe it is necessary to deal with the forces that underlie the market. He is concerned with how the left might reduce the inequities engendered by the market. But the chief agent of such amelioration, and the only one that can limit corporate dominance, is government—which Rule does not mention. It is a strange omission in an article dealing with market ideology. For it has been market ideology that has legitimated the attack on the regulatory and fiscal powers of government, powers that are indispensable in resisting or lessening the socially destructive impact of the market. ●

H. BRAND is a longtime contributor to *Dissent*.

James B. Rule Replies

HORST BRAND faults me for failing to identify market ideology as a “coherent system of thought, embodying a politically legitimating purpose.” I don’t think that this charge withstands even a casual reading of my essay, which inveighs at length against the ascendance of market ideology and many of its political applications.

What’s *really* at issue here, I think, is our differing attitudes to what he might call the “coherence” of market thinking. Brand, like the market enthusiasts he loves to hate, views social policy as a Manichean struggle between “the Market” and non-market forces, particularly government. Brand categorically extols the latter; the marketizers simply take the mirror-image opposite position.

My aim is to break with both positions—that is, to cast doubt on the necessity (and

even the sense) of voting “The Market” up or down, once and for all. Instead, I plead for hard-headed, critical examination of specific market arrangements, in hopes of distinguishing where they serve humane values and where they have to be opposed.

Market ideology is indeed a coherent system of thought—or at least, as coherent as ideologies get. But that very “coherence” ought to be suspect. Not all market arrangements need undermine values dear to the left; nor do all government constraints on market processes deserve our support. We on the left should be as suspicious of the categorical rejection of market ideas as of their slavish acceptance. ●

JAMES B. RULE’s most recent book is *Theory and Progress in Social Science*.

The Responsive Community

Steven Lukes

COMMUNITARIANISM" entered the language only within the last twenty years. You will not find it in the 1975 edition of *Webster's* dictionary, though you will find a "communitarian" there defined as "a member of a society that practices communism." What does this new ism signify? Is it, as Tocqueville wrote of "individualism" in 1835, "a new word to which a new idea has given birth"? Or does it name a distinctive new variant of a very old idea? Is the idea (if there is one) a theory or doctrine, or is it, like environmentalism, a perspective from which theories and doctrines may be developed?

The *Responsive Community* (TRC), the quarterly journal founded in 1990 by Amitai Etzioni and three academic colleagues, offers diverse—and not always satisfying—answers to these questions. Perhaps its best account of its project came in a 1994 essay by the Harvard law professor Mary Ann Glendon, who described the problem of finding "the optimal mix in a democratic economy, how to procure a just balance between individual freedom, equality, and social solidarity." That is to say, we face "the great dilemma of how to hold together the two halves of the divided soul of liberalism—our love of individual liberty and our sense of community for which we accept common responsibility. . . . Communitarianism can be understood as democracy's environmentalist movement, helping to heighten awareness of the political importance and endangered condition of the seedbeds of civic virtue."

Communitarianism, in short, is not an idea, theory, or doctrine, new or old, but a perspective that informs the work of TRC's contributors and like-minded thinkers. Some

members of this "network," as Etzioni terms it, have hopes that communitarianism might someday spark a full-blown social movement—a movement that might transform the very meaning of politics. That perspective was set out in "The Communitarian Platform," a 1991 document signed by a variety of mainly academic sympathizers. It is high-minded and declaratory ("Restoring the Moral Voice" . . . "Start with the Family" . . . "Schools: The Second Line of Defense" . . . "Cleaning Up the Polity" . . . "The Human Community"). In the journal's first issue, the editors declared themselves "as a group, neither right nor left, liberal or conservative, but dedicated to providing a voice to address and articulate issues that we believe concern us all."

Into whose ear does this voice speak? One answer emerged in 1993: "The Communitarian movement has a key role to play in the struggle over the soul of the Clinton administration . . . Clinton and Gore have shown strong communitarian commitments," wrote Etzioni. In 1994 the magazine cheerfully reported that "President Clinton, who has been reading Amitai Etzioni's latest book, *The Spirit of Community*, extolled communitarian values . . ." and in 1995 it praised Hillary Rodham Clinton's "courageous speech about America's greatest crisis." (This last note came in a regular feature, revealingly titled "The Communitarian Pulpit," in which the magazine published excerpts from the works of such figures as the Clintons, William Bennett, and Jesse Jackson.)

But since 1995 the magazine's focus has distinctly shifted away from the terrain of Washington politics toward considerations of local activism. Readers have learned about civic participation by taxpayers in Missoula, Montana, "Saving Lives in Seattle: A Model for Civic Responsibility," "Welfare Reform: New Hope in Milwaukee," "Keeping the Eld-

erly in the Neighborhood in St. Paul," and so on. The *Responsive Community*, in short, seems to have lost interest in speaking its truth to White House power, preferring instead to record and amplify the voices of civic and community activists.

Yet a larger—or, as the communitarian voice would say, a higher—purpose survives: the magazine continues to bring together a startlingly diverse coterie of political philosophers, sociologists, and political scientists, lawyers and public policy-experts, practitioners and consultants.

Sometimes these contributors work in familiar modes. Thus we revisit some of the classic questions in political philosophy (the public/private dichotomy, equality and difference, the potential universality of human rights) and in sociology (are voluntary associations in terminal decline? why do some democratic societies think about rights so differently from others?). But *TRC* also engineers some fruitful cross-fertilization: sometimes philosophers address social-scientific questions (Charles Taylor on theories of modernity) and vice versa (Philip Selznick defending communitarian liberalism and theorizing about justice).

The lawyers expound and debate such matters as the relationship of community to the First and Fourth Amendments, and to property and welfare rights, the rights of the homeless, and the deregulation of family law. But the bulk of *TRC*'s contents is directed at public policy questions in the broadest sense—from, say, "What Makes a Good Urban Park?" to "Can Associations of Business be True Community Builders?"

HOW FAR has the larger, or higher, purpose been achieved? Has *TRC* helped to bring what Etzioni calls "the moral voices across the land" into unison or harmony or at least intelligible discord? Are we any clearer about what communitarians stand for?

We know from the magazine what they are against: libertarianism and authoritarianism. Is communitarianism, then, an interpretation of liberalism (on the grounds, perhaps, that liberalism is too important to be left to the liberals)? In early issues Thomas A. Spragens offered a two-part critique of "The Limits of Lib-

ertarianism," arguing that "liberalism at its best has never fallen prey to the simple-minded individualism promulgated by libertarians"—a theme that Selznick has also developed. But Etzioni himself takes issue with the idea that communitarianism is liberalism properly conceived: he claims that "communitarians have established a fundamentally different paradigm" (toward which, for example, poor John Rawls can only bend without abandoning what Etzioni oddly calls his libertarian position). Etzioni foretells a "moral awakening without puritanism." He writes here and in his books as the prophet of a new idea; and perhaps this secular faith provides the energy required to run a journal, organize a network, and catch the ear of an American president and (it is said) a British prime minister.

But, as the evidence of *TRC*'s pages makes plain, communitarianism is not a new idea, or even a new variant of an old one. Glendon's formulation, cited above, gets it right: communitarianism responds to the old and general liberal dilemma of how to cultivate social cohesion and solidaristic behavior in the unpromising soil of the market economy and the urban society. Communitarianism is the collective name for a range of strenuous attempts to confront that dilemma in the United States today, where ethnic divisions, a ferociously shifting job market, the erosion of cultural capital, and the absence of socialist (let alone social democratic) traditions render the dilemma all the more acute.

Which is why Alasdair MacIntyre was right to explain in 1991 that he is not and never has been a communitarian, since he believes that such attempts "will always be ineffective or disastrous," not least because he believes "fundamental moral conflict" to be "so widespread and politically disabling" that community can only be built "at the level of particular institutions." Communitarians hang on to the hope of society-wide community (what Etzioni calls "The Community of Communities") while remaining systematically ambiguous about where precisely "community" is located, and evasive about conflicts between communities that compete for resources or allegiances. The hope (to quote Etzioni once more) is for "layered loyalties."

The *Responsive Community* makes it clear that communitarians are, indeed, political liberals in the sense of defending liberal freedoms (protecting free speech, resisting paternalist welfare policies and the excesses of identity politics). They are at least united in the object of their various concerns, and in their rejection of libertarian and authoritarian solutions. But does it really make sense to suppose that that object can be adequately addressed, in theory or in practice, from a perspective that is "neither right nor left, liberal or conservative"? That assumption has, I believe, three interlinked consequences, amply illustrated in the pages of the magazine.

FOR ONE thing, it drastically limits the topics addressed. The major absentee is the economy. There is very little here about the moral and cultural consequences of market processes, and virtually nothing about the ramifications of economic inequality. This point was well made in the *Responsive Community* itself, in a recent essay by Charles Derber. Communitarians have been silent, Derber lamented, about "corporate networks and contingent labor markets, both of which profoundly atomize employment and do violence to bonds among workers as well as between workers and companies." And they are no less silent about the degradation of employment and the stagnation of wages—particularly among the bottom third of the workforce—which "brutally sabotages communities, parenting, and family values." In short, they are "disinclined to focus on the structural side of our communitarian disrepair."

Second, the assumption in question leads communitarians, in their attempts to account for that disrepair in politically and socially nondivisive terms, to avoid precisely what divides left from right, and to focus instead on culture and "values" or at most on legal and institutional barriers to the missing solidarities. What is systematically avoided is concern with uncovering relations of power and dependency that render individuals resistant—and often immune—to calls for moral reawakening and mutual concern.

For the left, by definition, structured inequalities and power relations demand rectification through political action; whereas for the right they may be defended as desirable or as an inevitable cost to pay for other objectives. For communitarians, it would seem, they are best ignored, since attending to them threatens to undermine the very moral consensus that their perspective promises as both immanent ("in our tradition") and imminent (near realization). Thus the terms in which communitarians typically frame issues optimistically assume social actors potentially open to moral persuasion rather than intractably divided by conflicting interests and values.

In this respect, Etzioni exemplifies in an extreme or pure form what many of TRC's contributors exhibit in varying degrees: the belief that the various values of a "pluralistic community" are all jointly realizable without too much strain—that wealth creation, social cohesion, individual freedom, and the various goals of all kinds of different "communities" can all be fitted together and "optimized." (To its credit, the *Responsive Community* did publish, in its Summer 1995 issue, a powerful essay by Ralf Dahrendorf about the painful trade-offs and sacrifices under alternative political and cultural regimes. But Dahrendorf's message failed to seep under the magazine's skin.)

This leads me to the third and final aspect of communitarianism's resolute nonpartisanship: its tone of voice. Its accents are liberal, optimizing, reconciliatory, ecumenical, and, above all, serious. Indeed, reading the *Responsive Community* is a serious undertaking and its contributors are, as I have sought to stress, grappling with very serious issues. But there are various ways of being serious, and the communitarian way is endlessly earnest and uplifting. Such relentless elevation can be depressing. Is the idea of communitarian irony or satire a self-contradiction? ●

STEVEN LUKES teaches moral philosophy at the University of Siena and sociology at New York University. His most recent book is *The Curious Enlightenment of Professor Caritat*.

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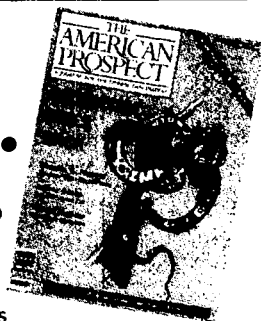
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DISP98

Growing Up Red

Amy Swerdlow

AT THE age of six, I already knew that capitalism was in crisis. In the summer of 1930, as my father, Yosef, and I were sitting on a large glacial rock in Bronx Park, our favorite spot for reading and “serious discussions,” he informed me without apology that he could not buy me the porcelain doll’s dishes for which I had been pining and whining because, like millions of other members of the American working class, he was unemployed, “out of work.” “I can’t even pay the rent,” he sighed, turning his pockets inside out to reveal only a few coins—not even one dollar bill. In a solemn, professorial, yet seductive manner, he explained that there had been a crash, of what I couldn’t make out, and that all of America was in trouble. We were facing an economic *krizzis*, he declared as if he were addressing thousands, and because of the *krizzis* we would soon see millions of workers standing in lines waiting for a piece of bread. “Thousands upon thousands of families will be evicted from their homes,” he predicted. I sensed that he was warning me that our own family, all three of us, would soon have to leave our sunny apartment facing Bronx Park. I could already see my bed and dresser on the sidewalk. Where would we go? As I struggled to hold back tears, Yosef suddenly turned cheerful and began to hum the Wobly song:

Hold the fort for we are coming
Union men be strong
Side by side we’ll battle onward
Victory is nigh!

He placed his arm on my shoulder protectively and advised me to be optimistic about the future, not because he would take care of me, but because the *krizzis* would awaken “the

masses.” The working class would triumph as it had in the Soviet Union. This would happen in my lifetime, he assured me, because “the contradictions of capitalism” would lead it to “self-destruct.”

My mother, Esther, was not as philosophical as my father in the face of our evolving family *krizzis*. She complained bitterly about Yosef’s indifference to their need to borrow from family and friends just to feed *dus kind*, the child, which is what they always called me when they were quarreling.

Although my mother had been a trade unionist in her youth, and a *sozialistke* from the age of thirteen, she objected to Yosef’s incessant political sermons. He seemed never to let up, or to face the desperate situation in our own home. What seemed to disturb my mother most, however, was “Hoover.” She invoked the name several times a day, as she shook her head and brought forth a pained *Oy Vey!* Having become a keen judge of which topics were likely to drive my mother wild, I couldn’t bring myself to ask her why she was so disturbed by Hoover. I suspected that Hoover had something to do with the *krizzis*, but I didn’t realize just how much—until our vacuum cleaner was repossessed.

It was confusing. Was the fat man with the red face who had come to take our vacuum cleaner, with all its little parts, really the president? Would the president come all the way from Washington to the Workers’ Cooperative Colony in the Bronx just to make trouble for my mother? There was nobody to consult. Yosef, who knew everything, but had to tell it in a long speech, was at a meeting of the Unemployment Council, and Esther was banging her fist on the door, which had just closed behind the departing Hoover. She was scolding and sobbing: “*Yold*, fool, it’s not your property, you stooge of the bosses, you scab, you *ante-semitt*.”

Finally, exhausted by her fury, Esther placed a damp washcloth on her forehead, told me to go to my room and "read something," and took to her bed with a migraine headache.

Yosef returned what seemed like many hours later to find Esther holding her head and moaning. He couldn't convince her that losing her first and only electrical appliance, in addition to the money already invested in paying it off, was neither humiliating nor tragic compared with the fate of the starving miners in Harlan County, Kentucky. She only sobbed when he pointed out that he had warned her not to buy anything on the installment plan because it was just another ruse by the capitalist class to enrich itself at the expense of poor workers. When Yosef realized that he could not engage his wife in a "rational discussion," he resorted to a taunt that I had heard many times before. "For God's sake," he shouted. "Why don't you go back to your *petit bourgeois* relatives in Hartford? That's where you belong!" Sensing that an ugly quarrel was brewing, I hid under my bed, eyes closed, with my hands covering my ears to shield myself from my father's shouts, my mother's broken-hearted retorts, and the throbbing in my own head. Under the bed I tried to convince myself that I was a child stolen from a happy *bourgeois* family, and prayed that the affluent, handsome, English-speaking parents of *Honey Bunch and Her Sister Sue*, the protagonists in a book both my parents had denounced as "bourgeois junk," would soon come to take me home to wonderful toys, bakery cookies, cheerful sisters, and good times.

During the wretched summer of 1930, my father, unemployed and without a son, often took me for walks and discussions in the park. He blamed the tensions with my mother, her "nervousness" and her migraine headaches, on capitalist-induced poverty, which led to anger and hopelessness for those who didn't understand that a socialist America was coming soon. Unlike my mother, I valued discussions with my father, having learned that listening to him was the only way to capture his attention.

I even tolerated my father's impatience. He moaned "*i-d-i-y-u-t*" and shook me when I couldn't grasp an important concept soon

enough. But his explanations of complex political and economic theories were so simple, or simplistic, that I understood him much of the time. When I did, he told me that I had a *gutte kup*, a good head, and hugged me so enthusiastically that I feared he would break my ribs.

YOSEF INTRODUCED me to the Marxist theory of surplus value when I was seven. He used an illustrated child's primer translated from the Russian that told the story of Mr. Knox, Mr. Box, and Mr. Fox, all greedy, fat-bellied capitalists with leering faces like those in William Gropper's painting *The Senate*. Knox, Box, and Fox employed workers in their factories to make hats, but these bad men, sometimes called bosses, sometimes capitalists, paid the workers for only a small part of what they received in payment for the hats they sold. The larger part they kept for themselves. Yosef made sure that I understood that the part the workers didn't get was called *surplus value*. Because the workers were paid for only a small portion of what they produced, they never had enough money to buy back for their own use the hats they made. According to Yosef, this led to overproduction, the *krizzis*, and freezing heads for workers' children.

My father never tired of telling me that under the dictatorship of the proletariat and the Five Year Plan there was no such thing as unemployment in the Soviet Union. Thus, I concluded, there would be no fighting parents and no frightened children. Yosef's description of the Soviet Union as the people's paradise was so enticing that I was anxious to see it for myself.

And lo—as in a fairy tale—the opportunity arose. Because Yosef believed that even a seven-year-old girl should have a well-rounded view of science as well as society, he determined to give me a graphic understanding of the "revolution of the planet." Having no globe, he used an orange, revolving it around his finger to illustrate that the world was round and turned on its axis every twenty-four hours. He made sure to point out that in approximately twelve hours, the United States would be where Russia had been in relation to the sun.

Eureka! In a flash I conceived a plan for deliverance. If at midnight the United States arrived where Russia was, I could get there by jumping out of my ground-floor bedroom window at the right moment in the revolution of the planet. The word "revolution" had a reassuring ring. All I needed to do was to awaken at the right moment in the middle of the night, and off I would go. I could send for my parents later.

But it was not so easy to leave home, even for paradise. I overslept night after night. Finally, when a friend was sleeping over because his parents were at a meeting, I told him about my plan. Arthur, coming from a background almost identical to mine, was enthusiastic. He was ready to make the jump. We agreed that the first one up would wake the other.

In what seemed like only a few moments, Arthur was tugging at me. I jumped up and seeing that it was very dark outside I knew the time had come. We flung open my bedroom window with pounding hearts and a sense of destiny. But to our astonishment and dismay, what we saw when we peered out into the night was the familiar corner of Allerton Avenue and Bronx Park East. There, a feeble street lamp shone on what was then called the Hebrew Home for the Incurables—as gray and as grim as its name.

Arthur and I were crushed. What had gone wrong? Had my father misled me, or had I misunderstood? I hoped to clear it all up in the morning and try again.

As my eyes began to close and my head dropped back on my pillow, I had a troubling

thought. What if the people's paradise was like Mount Olympus (which I had also wanted to visit when my parents presented me with a beautifully illustrated *Child's Book of Greek Mythology*)? Yosef had made me very angry when he told me that Olympus was not a real place. It was a myth. "What's a myth?" I cried, suspecting the usual bad news. His reply was more than I could understand or tolerate. "Myths are stories people make up," he intoned, "to understand the sun and moon, night and day, the stars, the storms, the seasons and where we go after we die." People invented myths in ancient times to make themselves feel safe and secure, he said, before science was discovered and explained all these things rationally.

I gave up on Mount Olympus, reluctantly. Later I was to give up on the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics—also a myth. However, I never abandoned my yearning for a world of justice, peace and joy. I have spent my adult life seeking the way, with an ever more critical view of the notion of utopia. I now settle for "Band-Aid" efforts in the local community, something my father sneered at. But what I can't accept is the realization that, unlike Yosef the believer, I can't promise my children and grandchildren a people's paradise in their lifetime. ●

AMY SWERDLOW is professor emerita, Sarah Lawrence College, and author of *Women Strike for Peace: Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the 1960s*, and numerous articles on U.S. women in radical movements for social transformation.

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Allen Agonistes

David Yaffe

AT THE 1992 Republican Convention, Newt Gingrich hurled the nastiest salvo he could think of toward Bill Clinton, saying that the allegedly libidinous governor of Arkansas had "Woody Allen family values" (in stark contrast to Garth Brooks's televised eulogy for Jimmy Stewart: "Leave it to Jimmy Stewart to have a traditional American family right in the middle of Hollywood"). Allen's romance with young Soon-Yi Previn left a permanent scar on his otherwise idealized world of glamorous jobs, witty banter, and enviable apartments; suddenly, Woody's world didn't seem so perfect anymore.

A book jacket says of the self-deprecating Allen that "his only regret is that he has is not someone else." In various interviews he has expressed a sincere desire to switch places with a number of luminaries, from Federico Fellini and Ingmar Bergman to Louis Armstrong and Marlon Brando. Until that summer of Woody's discontent, I felt the same way about Allen that he felt about his heroes. I wanted to live in that cloistered urban paradise, where everyone's neuroses made for great conversation, and life was full of romance, culture, and Upper West Side brownstones. The first Allen film I remember seeing was *Zelig* (1983), accompanied by my mother, at a sparsely populated Dallas multiplex when I was only ten. Even if I didn't have the faintest idea at the time who F. Scott Fitzgerald and Susan Sontag were, I was transfixed by the mythology the nerdy little man in the glasses created for himself, how deftly he maneuvered himself into history.

Today, as I leave a showing of *Deconstructing Harry*, I am filled with a mixture of admiration and queasiness; the man still churns out

impressive films, but I no longer envy his life so much. Indeed, *Deconstructing Harry* could have been titled *Portrait of the Artist as an Old Lech*, as it includes love scenes with women young enough to be his granddaughters, cripple jokes (Woody and Billy Crystal compare encounters with "Pearl in a wheelchair"), and a series of scenes in which Judy Davis, Kirstie Alley, Amy Irving, and even Mariel Hemingway are put in the roles of whiny, matronly shrews. Not surprisingly, by casting himself as a renowned comic writer with artistic leanings, Allen has inspired accusations of autobiography, which he vigorously denies with a New Critical distinction between the well-wrought urn and the messiness of biography. Allen may repeatedly insist that his films have no relation to his own life, but that's only when he's talking about his life's controversial aspects. Woody thinks that the public unfairly conflates art and life, but our confusion is really between revealing, say, a predilection for much younger women vs. the admission in *Manhattan* (1979), later confirmed in an interview, that Sam Wo's is his favorite Chinese restaurant.

Although the art vs. autobiography debate is never simple, the art vs. morality debate is even more problematic. Just as Allen makes it difficult for us to ignore his own life, he makes it even harder for us to ignore morality. This is not only because the repulsion he manifests in *Deconstructing Harry* suggests not an indifference to morality but a need to defy it, but also because Allen himself has played the role of moralist in earlier films. In *Annie Hall* (1977), he is the upholder of art, culture, and the last defender of New York City (a seemingly quixotic cause at the time) against the L.A. superficiality of Paul Simon's character. *Manhattan* ends with Woody, who has been sleeping with a seventeen-year-old, lecturing Michael Murphy about ethics in front of a hanging skeleton. In *Broadway Danny Rose*

(1984), he is the agent with the heart of gold, martyred for his generosity.

But *Crimes and Misdemeanors* (1989) is his true stab at humanism, in which Allen insists on being moral: in a world in which Alan Alda gets away with murder metaphorically while Martin Landau does so literally, Allen and Sam Waterston play nice guys who always finish last. *Crimes and Misdemeanors* is pure existential moralism; it proposes a code that states that financial, artistic, and romantic success is unimportant compared to the integrity of Woody's character, who is willing to be a failure in the name of decency.

IT IS ONLY in his post-trial work—after Allen entered the tabloids for alleged child molestation as well as seducing his ex-lover's adopted daughter—that there has been a subtle shift, most fully manifested in *Deconstructing Harry*. *Bullets over Broadway* (1994), the first postscandal screenplay, finds the mediocre writer, played by John Cusack, clinging to bourgeois morality, while only the amoral mobster, Chazz Palminteri—who eventually kills a bad actress for the sake of his play—truly wins the artistic sweepstakes. *Mighty Aphrodite* (1995) is a detour, good P.R. for Allen as an upstanding family man. *Everyone Says I Love You* (1996), meanwhile, seems a desperate attempt to distract himself from his woes by escaping into the world of the MGM musicals he loved as a kid, but with a nastier, buried subtext of cynicism. Finally, *Deconstructing Harry* unleashes the bile many Woody watchers have been waiting for. In his pretrial films, Allen could be both moralistic and autobiographical. But autobiography and morality collide so violently in *Deconstructing Harry* that the film seems like an elegy for his past moralist self.

In an early scene, Lucy (Judy Davis) tells the Allen character what most people in the audience are probably thinking: "You take people's suffering and turn it into gold—literary gold." This accusation is repeated throughout the film, in which Allen goes on a journey upstate with a prostitute, the son he has kidnapped, and a dying friend in tow, to receive an honorary degree, while flashing back to his failed relationships and wickedly funny fic-

tions. Toward the end, Harry confirms Lucy's accusation when an English professor asks about his latest fictional protagonist. "It's me thinly disguised," says Harry. "I don't think I should even disguise it anymore. It's me."

Woody's filmic tell-all is apropos to a moment when grown men can cry on *Oprah*, and the public can ponder whether oral sex in the White House constitutes adultery. The glare of the tabloids has encompassed the tragic and the absurd so thoroughly that the front-page *New York Times* story reporting Ted Hughes's belated poems about Sylvia Plath becomes bleached into the same color as the endless tales of Monica Lewinsky. Taking advantage of the memoir craze, Mia Farrow has written her own version of *Life with Woody*, but it is Allen himself who insists on having the last word. In *Deconstructing Harry*, he out-memoirs the memoirists. There are some who will find this approach to filmmaking self-indulgent, but the same people who would object to this confessional mode would also have to object to Fellini's *8 1/2*, François Truffaut's *Day for Night*, Bergman's *Persona*, and much of Allen's own oeuvre. In fact, Allen created a particular mode of self-indulgence, and anyone who objects to it might as well chuck most of his other movies out the window as well. Those who are willing to indulge Allen will find that, navel gazing though he may be, he is less generous toward himself now than he was in any previous film. What makes the self-indulgence of *Deconstructing Harry* different from that of earlier films is his unwilling dual role as tabloid character and auteur. Now when Woody puts his soul on screen, it's no longer just about his favorite Cézanne painting; it evokes a series of *New York Post* covers with paparazzi shots of Woody and Soon-Yi hand-in-hand.

Deconstructing Harry contains even less self-justification than Allen's interviews, in which, alluding to the Soon-Yi affair, he admits to no wrongdoing, claiming "I was the wronged party." Woody-watchers may be shocked to find Allen calling Judy Davis a "world-class, meshugene cunt," asking the black prostitute Cookie (Hazel Goodman) to "hit me, give me a blow job," and popping pills with booze (in *Manhattan*, Woody's character recoils in horror at Diane Keaton's occasional use of the f-word).

After Elizabeth Shue dumps the emotionally stunted Harry for the obviously superior Billy Crystal (who, in return, is characterized as Satan in one of Harry's fictions), we are meant to feel little sympathy for Harry as he's bailed out of jail by the happy couple. Allen has said that he originally intended to call the film *The Meanest Man in the World*, as if to respond to the public's vilification of him in the past five years. In a recent interview, Allen vigorously denied that he is Harry, insisting, "I lead a basically middle-class life. I work, I don't burn the candle at both ends, I practice the clarinet diligently like a nice, Jewish boy. . . . I do my exercises and my treadmill. I'm not someone who's out all night indulging, nor have I had a dissipated life." *Deconstructing Harry* could perhaps be used as evidence that Allen hasn't capitulated to his attackers' view of him, but has rendered that view grotesque. The film urges the public to back off and let him go on with his decadent life, in which the world is justified only as an aesthetic phenomenon. In one of Harry's fictions, the elderly Max (who would have been a great role for Zero Mostel) is confronted by his wife about reports that he killed and ate a former wife, as well as his mistress and children. "If I tell you why I did it, do you promise not to *noodge* me?" pleads Max with dead-on Borscht-belt timing. Allen, too, would love to stop being *noodged* about marrying his ex-partner's adopted daughter, but, unlike Max, he doesn't even feel the need to justify himself.

ONE UNSYMPATHETIC reviewer of *Deconstructing Harry* admitted that he could fill his review with great lines from the movie, but said that a string of great jokes does not a great movie make. That may be, but what jokes! *Deconstructing Harry* offers an almost endless supply of top-notch one-liners, within a startlingly intricate structure, although what the structure contains is disconcerting. Allen is clearly pushing the envelope on how repulsive he can make the Hollywood leading man. In *Play It Again Sam* (1972), Woody has to learn to renounce his idolatry of Bogart and trust himself to be a romantic hero, which he achieves as the stuttering, neurotic, yet sweetly romantic Alvy Singer in *Annie Hall*. Twenty years later, Allen still casts himself as

the improbable object of affection of beauties like Elizabeth Shue, but the charm of Alvy Singer has given way to a man who uses whores, pops pills, and calls women "cunts." If the title character of *Deconstructing Harry* seems to be indicting himself, the viewer could also indict the women around him, who, it seems, are only attracted to this man for his fame. Not surprisingly, Allen's next film will be called *Celebrity*.

When *Annie Hall* transformed Allen from successful comic filmmaker into cultural spokesman, he was an odd mixture of nostalgia and progressiveness. His New York was all McKim, Mead, and White façades with a soundtrack dominated by Sidney Bechet or Mozart; yet his attitude toward sex put him right in the cultural moment of 1977, when *Annie Hall* swept the Oscars (and Allen, as usual, was playing Bechet at Michael's Pub). Woody may not have liked the music of the sixties upheaval, but he sure benefited from the sexual revolution. Many of his films—particularly *Deconstructing Harry*—find his characters in an endless revolving door of relationships with varying degrees of fidelity. Such frankness seemed cutting edge in *Annie Hall*, in which Annie and Alvy sleep together on the first date. More than twenty years later, *Deconstructing Harry*'s similarly lax sexuality makes Allen seem like a considerably less charming Austin Powers, defrosted after the sexual revolution without realizing that times have changed yet again. Even though Allen is a neurotic swinger representing his time in *Annie Hall*, he has a sympathetic commentary to offer. Such decency has been replaced with a raw honesty in *Deconstructing Harry*, and it is apparently an honesty that leaves all other morality aside. Allen's abandonment of the sentimental nebbish of twenty years ago is as much a commentary on our own nasty times as it is a reflection of his own inner decay. Whatever the consequences of his moral abdication, *Deconstructing Harry* makes it painfully clear that he can't have it both ways anymore: the confessional filmmaker and self-righteous moralist can no longer coexist. ●

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Higher Ground

Michael Walzer

EVERYTHING FOR SALE:
THE VIRTUES AND LIMITS OF MARKETS
by Robert Kuttner
Knopf, 1997 410 pp \$27.50

THIS IS an immensely valuable book that has not gotten the attention it deserves. The reasons for its (relative) neglect have to do mostly with the current state of our political culture but also with certain strategic choices for which the author alone is responsible. Writing a little late about a book that is meant to be topical and timely, I am going to focus on those reasons and on certain of Kuttner's choices.

The major reason is also the obvious one: Kuttner is arguing for an old liberal and social democratic orthodoxy that it is now fashionable to disparage—and that some of my leftier-than-thou friends still think is boring, even when they find themselves forced to defend it. But Kuttner is not writing under compulsion; the position he defends is one in which he really believes. It lies somewhere between the left's once fierce antimarket radicalism and the currently triumphalist, equally radical, free market ideology. The latter is his more frequent target, since it is so much more powerful, and so dangerous, these days. But his book is a judicious and detailed examination of where the market works as well as of where it doesn't, where its effects are beneficial as well as where they are pernicious. He is opposed to the all-powerful state and the planned economy; he is in favor of a regulatory and activist state, which is also constitutionally limited and democratic. What this adds up to, I think, is the American New Deal revisited or the European "postwar settlement," best represented

by the achievements of the British Labor Party and the Swedish and German social democrats. Though he doesn't identify himself in quite these terms, this is the politics that Kuttner represents, and it is still a decent and effective politics—and much in need of strong intellectual representation.

Like any sensible person, Kuttner is willing to consider modifications of this politics (and also extensions of it, to address the problems of environmental degradation, for example). He understands that global competition now requires a revision as well as a renewal of left liberalism and social democracy, and that neither of these will be easy. His argument is open to disagreement and revision; though it is sternly resistant to the prevailing intellectual winds, it is equally resistant to the ideological style of the Old Left. Even his polemical passages are thoughtful and restrained. He is making arguments, he says, not waving banners. "This book is intended as a careful sorting out, not a manifesto." Indeed, his title is his only banner. The politics that Kuttner represents walks a little cautiously these days.

One of the best illustrations of his method is his discussion of innovation—a big subject in contemporary economic theory and always a hard subject for the left, since individual ambition, competitive pressure, and entrepreneurial energy seem to provide a better account of invention and experiment than any of our own (no doubt nicer) descriptions of cooperative work and public enterprise. Kuttner focuses on technological advance, and tells a complicated story of how it is actually achieved. This is a story in which the free market, as it is ideologically described by free marketeers, is either absent or ineffective. Very large companies, oligopolistic industries, and interventionist states play the key parts. Liberal capitalist states, of course, play their part mostly in disguise, providing for economic

growth while pretending that they are doing nothing more than ensuring national security. Kuttner's pages on the importance of war and cold-war research, sponsored and paid for by the government, are exemplary in suggesting what the *normal* role of the state should be, indeed, has to be, if innovation is to be sustained.

EVERYTHING FOR SALE is a big book; Kuttner argues his case at length; like contemporary biographers, who tell us what their subjects did on every Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, he makes no concessions to the supposedly short attention span of the reading public. Here is everything you might want to know about innovation and growth, labor markets, the banking industry, the problems of health care, environmental regulation, airline deregulation, and many similar issues currently or recently in the headlines. The detail is part of Kuttner's persuasive strategy and a large part of his book's value. There is material here for a couple of dozen *Dissent* articles. No liberal/left publicist or political figure should speak or write about any of Kuttner's topics without reading his book.

But length and detail will probably inhibit many of the "common readers" to whom the book is addressed. It isn't an academic treatise, but it is an example of the political tract drifting toward treatise-like proportions, perhaps because Kuttner is uncertain (not without reason) about his common readers and also because he seems a little nervous about the responses of the professoriat.

This last point may account for the one academic argument in the book—Kuttner's effort to address the theory of "rational choice," which he regards as the prevailing ideological justification for much of what he opposes in American politics today. Rational choice is a highly formalized account of economic and political decision making, based on the simplifying (reductionist) idea that all decisions are rational and self-interested and that they are always aimed at the "maximization" of individual preferences. When capitalists decide how to invest their money, when consumers decide how to spend theirs, when workers decide whether or not to join a union, when vot-

ers decide to support this party or that one—all that they are doing, insofar as they are acting rationally, is "cost-benefit analysis," and the only costs and benefits that come into consideration are their own: how will acting in this way or that way advance or harm their particular interests?

This theory is dominant today in most economics departments and increasingly so among political scientists, and it does indeed provide the basis for free-market arguments (as well as for mathematical models of market behavior). But I don't think that it will bear the weight that Kuttner assigns it. Academic theories can certainly have an impact on political debate, but they have this impact only in conjunction with political forces that use them for particular purposes; they can't determine their own use.

I share Kuttner's dislike of rational choice (even though I do try, sometimes, to make rational choices). The theory overestimates the importance of purely individual calculations, and it undervalues moral judgment and social solidarity. But it is a large theory, and it has a wide variety of uses. There now exists, for example, a revisionist Marxism based on rational-choice theory (though this is an entirely academic enterprise). And the basic idea of rational choice was used in the late 1960s and early 1970s by the philosopher John Rawls to defend what is in effect a social democratic account of distributive justice. It's at least possible, if a little hard these days, to imagine political circumstances in which Rawls's strong insistence that rational choice yields egalitarian principles would find broad acceptance.

But were this to happen, it wouldn't be because of the power of the theory. A conjunction of left political forces would also be necessary, and this would reflect an underlying moral agreement favorable to egalitarian arguments. Kuttner gives us no sense of what such an agreement might be like—no sense even of what it was like in the days when the "mixed economy" rather than the free market was common wisdom. The mixed economy had Keynesian theoretical foundations, but it was the practical achievement of parties and movements that embodied a moral vision and that could not have achieved what they did with-

out that vision.

The market operates impersonally and, so it seems, inexorably, following what we have been taught to think of as "laws." Opposition to the market always seems somehow artificial; it involves external forces, state interventions, bureaucratic regulation. And these can only be justified by invoking significant human purposes, morally attractive ends-in-view, collective political (rather than private consumer) preferences for dignity, say, or democratic empowerment, or equal social standing. The goods associated with these values are not equitably delivered by the market, sometimes they are not delivered at all; and that's why we need alternative delivery systems. That's why people say, with a passion, that these goods should not be "for sale."

Kuttner's book doesn't deal with these collective preferences (the word "equality" doesn't

appear in his index); the book is in fact a model of dispassion . . . and of economic rationality. This also is part of Kuttner's persuasive strategy. He wants to defend the idea that everything should not be for sale entirely on efficiency grounds: "I will not be treating, except in passing, the market's moral limitations." State action, he insists, is the necessary means to the material well-being of the greatest number of people. The ends that the marketeers claim to achieve can only be achieved with extra-market help. He is right, of course, and I have not seen a better argument for this simple (but now fiercely disputed) proposition. But reading Kuttner also strengthened my own conviction that the left can not stand firmly on any ground that isn't (also) moral ground. Nor can we march without banners. ●

MICHAEL WALZER is the co-editor of *Dissent*.

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INVISIBLE REPUBLIC:
BOB DYLAN'S BASEMENT TAPES
by Greil Marcus
Henry Holt and Company, 1997
286 pp \$22.50

TIME OUT OF MIND
by Bob Dylan
Columbia Records, 1997

ANTHOLOGY OF AMERICAN FOLK MUSIC
Harry Smith, ed.
Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings, 1997, re-issue
6 CD set

IN MID-CONCERT on a sweet northern Virginia night last August, Bob Dylan, looking relaxed and rejuvenated after a grave illness, peered out over his electric guitar and spoke to the audience, something he hardly ever does.

There's a distinguished gentleman here who came, I want to introduce him, named Alan Lomax. I don't know if many of you heard of him.

Lomax, the great ethnomusicologist, the premier collector of old American folk tunes—sure, some of us had heard of him. (A whoop went up from the crowd.) But hadn't Lomax, the high priest of gut-bucket traditionalism, once bitterly denounced Dylan as a sell-out? Wasn't it Lomax, along with Pete Seeger, who'd tried to cut the power cords to Dylan's amplifi-

ers at the famous 1965 Newport Folk Festival?

Dylan continued his respectful little speech.

Yes, he's here, he's made uh, a trip out t'see me, I used to know him years ago, I learned a lot there. And Alan . . . Alan was one of those who unlocked the secrets of this kind of music. So, if you've got anybody to thank, it's Alan.

Yips and low cheers came from the crowd. Dylan rasped, "Thank you, Alan."

Then the drummer clicked out a beat, Dylan chuckled mischievously, and the high-voltage band slammed into, of all things, "Highway 61 Revisited." It was not Lomax's kind of music at all, and yet here was Dylan saying that it really *was* that kind of music, that all of his music—or the best of it, anyway, like "Highway 61"—is and always has been that kind of mysterious music, a fact that few people, friend or foe, have ever fully understood.

Greil Marcus is one of the few. Reading Marcus's *Invisible Republic* (which appeared late last spring) and then listening to Dylan's output on stage and on CD over the succeeding months has given me the feeling that the critic and the artist have locked into some strange, empathetic communication. Either Marcus has been reading Dylan's mind or Dylan has read Marcus's book—or, maybe, both things have happened. Whatever the case, *Invisible Republic* ranks as the most brilliant study of Dylan's work to date, and an important element in the unexpected recent resurgence of Dylan's aura and musical career, capped by the three Grammy awards he received in February for his latest release, *Time*

Out of Mind.

After his gospel songwriting period ("Gotta Serve Somebody") in the late seventies, Dylan moved dangerously close to becoming a has-been. Apart from "Jokerman," "Silvio," some amusing japes with the Traveling Wilburys, and one or two cuts on *Oh Mercy* (1989), his new material was tedious. What subsequently came to light as his greatest song of the period, "Blind Willie McTell," collected dust for years in a Columbia Records vault, unreleased. ("It just never came out for me," he later explained.) Dylan's concert performances often amounted to semi-coherent chantings of songs new, old, and ancient. His singular voice sounded shot at last, and his career was spinning in circles.

In 1991, *the bootleg series volumes 1-3* finally brought "McTell" to the world, but also served as a reminder of Dylan's long-term decline. (The reminder would have been even stronger had Columbia Records not decided, four years later, to cancel the much-anticipated *bootleg volumes 4 and 5*—a stunning, two-CD recording of Dylan and the Hawks's historic Manchester, England, concert in 1966, now available together from the bootleggers as *Guitars Kissing & the Contemporary Fix*.) Two solo albums of acoustic folk and quasi-folk standards, *Good As I Been to You* (1992) and *World Gone Wrong* (1993), showed Dylan in better form, getting back to basics as a gargly-voiced singer and strummer of fatalistic songs like Stephen Foster's "Hard Times." His solid performance of greatest hits on MTV *Unplugged* in 1994 had a few supporters talking about a minor Dylan renaissance. As it happened, Dylan was also building toward *Time Out of Mind*—an album whose power caught most of the critics (and even many die-hard Dylan fans) by surprise.

Among the few who were not surprised, though, were Marcus's readers—for Dylan's current work is wholly in keeping with the themes that Marcus develops in *Invisible Republic*. Well established (along with Ellen Willis) as one of the few sixties rock critics who has become more interesting with the passing of time, Marcus has in recent years turned himself into a cultural historian-cum-mysterian, with a gift for tracing the under-

ground connections between such unlikely figures as the French Situationist Guy Debord and the British punk rocker Johnny Rotten. Like his fellow mysterian (and also a sometime popular-music critic) Luc Sante, Marcus has become particularly interested in how historical legends and oracular styles have uncannily recurred over the centuries in America, leaving us, as Sante puts it, as "custodians of a history of which [we] are seldom consciously aware." As he pondered those recurrences, Marcus heard something oddly uplifting in *Good As I Been to You* and *World Gone Wrong*, something, he writes, that "removed [Dylan] from the prison of his own career and returned him—or his voice, as a sort of mythical fact—to the world at large."

ABOVE ALL, those albums reminded Marcus of Dylan and the Band's famously cryptic *Basement Tapes* from 1967, which had since appeared in a complete (bootlegged) five-CD version. And after making that connection, Marcus made another one, detecting in the basement tapes the recurring spirit of a virtually forgotten recording, Harry Smith's six-volume *Anthology of American Folk Music*, from 1952. Finally, through Smith, he was able to link Dylan to a bygone, hermetic, fabulist land which Marcus calls "the old weird America"—a mythic place, populated by cuckoo birds and spike drivers and John the Revelator, to which Dylan has, over the years, added his own ragmen and amphetamine-fogged ladies and Judas Priest.

Smith's "*Anthology* was our bible," the singer and ex-Dylan mentor Dave Van Ronk once recalled of the fifties Greenwich Village folk scene. "We all knew every word of every song on it, including the bad ones." I remember Harry Smith from twenty years later, as an aging Village dopest and would-be shaman (he was fifty!) who lived in the Chelsea Hotel, frequented the occult section of my father's bookshop, and was reputed to be a brilliant filmmaker. I'd seen a copy of his folk-music anthology a few years earlier at Izzy Young's Folklore Center, but hadn't listened to it (being, in 1966, barely fifteen and deeply into the new, electric Bob Dylan); and I hadn't a clue that the wasted Village seer to whom I some-

times sold books about the Cabala (only one of several such wasted Village seers I knew vaguely in the sixties and seventies) had had the slightest influence on anyone who was worth influencing. Thanks to Marcus—and thanks to Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, which re-issued the *Anthology* in CD form last year—I now know better.

As Marcus relates, Smith started out as an improbable, self-taught, pioneering bohemian folklorist. Raised in and around Seattle by a pair of deluded Theosophists—his mother thought she was the czarina of Russia; his biological father may have been the czarina's ex-cowboy husband or may have been the young Aleister Crowley—Smith, while still a teenager, investigated and recorded the rituals and music of nearby Indian tribes. When he was about eighteen, he abandoned plans to study anthropology at the University of Washington and drifted down to Berkeley, where, after falling in with the demimonde of painters, communists, and poets, he began collecting commercial recordings of string bands and gospel singers dating back to the 1920s and 1930s.

These became the basis for the *Anthology*, which included eighty-four sides from relatively well-known (Blind Lemon Jefferson, the Carter Family), soon-to-be rediscovered (Dock Boggs, Mississippi John Hurt), and utterly obscure performers (J.P. Nestor, Ernest Phipps), male and female, black and white, Anglo and Cajun, sacred and profane (without noting which was which). On the anthology's cover, and in an accompanying booklet, Smith jumbled together references to Crowley, Pythagoras's monochord, and the early modern English mystic Robert Fludd, as if all of them, Marcus writes, "and the likes of Jilson Setters, Ramblin' Thomas, the Alabama Sacred Heart Singers, Charlie Poole and the North Carolina Ramblers, and Smith himself were calling on the same gods."

There was a considerable overlap between Smith's efforts and those of the more mainstream folklorists of the thirties, forties, and fifties. (By my count, at least fifteen songs in Smith's *Anthology*, nearly one in five, also appear in Alan Lomax's canonical compilation of transcriptions, *The Folk Songs of North America* [1960].) But there were important differ-

ences. Smith had a taste for the wilder, more fantastic, scarier, and subjective side of American folk music, including such tunes as Kelly Harrell's "Charles Giteau" (the purported scaffold peroration of President James A. Garfield's convicted assassin, Charles Guiteau) and "My Name is John Johanna" (a creepy Arkansas tale of a rattail-haired giant and his walking skeleton workmen). Whereas Lomax, like his great folklorist father, John, and numerous others was chiefly interested in pure, "authentic" material, as transcribed in churches, cotton fields, and juke joints, Smith made it a point to collect only what had been commercially recorded—that is, music that people had once actually paid to hear.

Above all, the Berkeleyans' aesthetic sensibilities diverged from those of the more "progressive" historicist folklorists back East, including the Lomaxes and, even more, Popular Front-inflected folkies like Pete Seeger, who would go on to lead the folk revival in which Dylan got his professional start. Marcus quotes the critic Richard Cándida Smith:

The avant-garde on the West Coast had a preference for cosmological-theosophical over psychological-sociological understandings of art and the individual's relationship to larger forces. The sacred, which need not involve a personalized deity, was valued over the profane. Historical "facts" served hierarchy, while tradition was liberating because it grew from a voluntary personal response to the repository of the past.

IN 1952, of course, the tensions between, on the one hand, Lomax-style and Seeger-style folklorism and, on the other, Smith-style folklorism would have been hard to detect. (Indeed, Smith's *Anthology* appeared on the echt-New York label, Moses Asch's Folkways Records.) Fifteen years later, however, those tensions exploded in and around the figure of Bob Dylan.

According to the standard view, young Dylan hit the New York scene as a Woody Guthrie imitator, became a star as the boy genius of folk protest music, then turned against his musical and political friends (and became an even bigger star) by going electric and singing songs of acidulous self-absorption. Aging

rock fans can recite the events that signaled this great divide in pop culture—the booing of Dylan’s amplified performance of “Maggie’s Farm” at Newport in July 1965, the even more hostile reactions at Forest Hills later that year and in England and Europe in 1966. On one side of the divide stood Bobby Dylan, the folk-revival and civil-rights-movement darling, a soulful man-child in his work shirt and denims; on the other stood Dylan, a detached, pouting hipster in Ray-Ban shades and psychedelic threads, the epicenter of mid-sixties cool.

Marcus begins *Invisible Republic* in the middle of this familiar story, with an emotionally and musically perfect-pitch account of Dylan’s turbulent 1966 tour; and he confirms the story’s elementary veracities. “Art was the speech of the folk revival,” Marcus astutely notes, “and yet, at bottom, the folk revival did not believe in art at all. Rather, life—a certain kind of life—equaled art, which ultimately meant that life replaced it.” The folk revivalists’ idealized life was, naturally, a life of suffering, poverty, and struggle, uncorrupted by greed and money and moral ambiguity—a politicized, left-wing version of Lomax’s folk authenticity. Yet by equating poverty with art, Marcus contends, the folkies’ version of socialist realism ended up negating both art and the artist. (“The tobacco sheds of North Carolina are in it and all of the blistered and hurt and hardened hands cheated and left empty, hurt and left crying,” Woody Guthrie himself wrote of Sonny Terry’s harmonica playing,” Marcus notes. “He didn’t say if Sonny Terry was in it.”)

Dylan negated this negation of art, artists, and self in his great electric songs of 1965 and 1966, including “Highway 61 Revisited,” “Like a Rolling Stone,” “Desolation Row,” and “Visions of Johanna.” But as Marcus shows, Dylan was also up to something that most critics and fans, distracted by the amplifiers and seemingly surreal subjectivist lyrics, did not notice at the time: he was, in effect, escaping the folk revival by reviving a different sort of traditional sensibility, found in portions of Lomax’s collection and, even more, in Harry Smith’s (which Dylan had first heard in Minneapolis in 1959 or 1960).

True, Dylan tried to cover his tracks, by

announcing that his folk singing had always been a con, a way to get attention. Elliptically, though, through a haze of pot and whatever else he was enjoying, Dylan tried to explain himself, when he told an interviewer in Austin, Texas, that folk music

is not Depression songs . . . its foundations aren’t *work*, its foundations aren’t “slave away” and all this. Its foundations are—except for Negro songs which are based on that and just kind of overlapped—the main body of it is just based on myth and the Bible and plague and famine and all kinds of things which are nothing but mystery and you can see it in all the songs. Roses growing right up out of people’s hearts and naked cats in bed with spears growing right out of their backs and seven years of this and eight years of that and it’s really something that nobody can really touch.

THIS WAS not one of Dylan’s vintage put-ons; rather, in breaking with the old guard, he was returning to his roots, revising his earlier revisions of American folk music—and doing so commercially, shamelessly so, just as Clarence Ashley, Uncle Dave Macon, and the rest of Harry Smith’s troubadours had attempted to do half a century before. Ellen Willis—who, remarkably, knew what was happening—sympathetically described the new Dylan as “a fifth columnist from the past.” But in the event, nobody, not even Dylan, made the precise connections, as Marcus does now.

Dylan’s near-fatal fall from a motorcycle during a pause in the 1966 tour interrupted his experiments; and never again would he play rock music with the brilliance and burning desperation (born, in part, of audience hostility) that he and the Hawks, soon to be renamed the Band, had played before his accident. And yet, as Marcus shows, when the recuperating Dylan and his sidemen quietly holed up in Woodstock, New York, they continued what they had begun, in a more protected and playful setting, fashioning a musical response to the hatred that they had stirred up.

Not intended for public hearing, the basement sessions stretched out over several months

and produced just over a hundred recordings, including original songs, revamped folk chestnuts, pop standards, faux pop standards, and masterful inebriated nonsense—a collection that, Marcus claims, sounds like “a shambling, twilight version of Smith’s *Anthology*.” And sure enough, with Marcus’s help, the connections begin to open up, between the *Anthology*’s “See That My Grave Is Kept Clean,” the revised version of the song that the young Dylan recorded on his first album, and then the re-revision that appears on the basement tapes; between the biblical desolation of Rev. Sister Mary Nelson’s “Judgment” (song number 47 in the *Anthology*) and “Tears of Rage”; between the more magical currents of the American folk imagination circa 1927 and those circa 1967.

Marcus is not, by any means, saying that either Dylan or his friends merely imitated the *Anthology* singers. In 1965 and 1966, Dylan did not try to hide his literary interests, even as he mocked vacuous, conformist literary men like Mr. Jones. It’s hard to imagine one of the *Anthology* singers composing a lyric involving Phaedra or Ophelia, as Dylan did. In the still-unreleased film of the 1966 tour, Dylan tests the limits of musical correctness by telling an English rocker and blues fan, mordantly, that “Leadbelly is sort of inarticulate.” Likewise, Dylan and company innovated at Woodstock. Elaborating a wonderful metaphor that extends over two chapters of *Invisible Republic*, Marcus describes an imaginary town conjured up by the basement-tape songs—Kill Devil Hills, he calls it—and contrasts it with a town conjured up by the *Anthology*, which he calls Smithville:

Smithville folk would recognize this place—the jail is full, and some people still remember when the Fourth of July was the biggest day of the year—but they might have trouble keeping up. For one thing, this town is more drunk. For another . . . [t]he Bible is everywhere, but less invoked than tested against the happenstance of ordinary affairs or invasions of the uncanny . . . people talk funny here. Instead of the language of allegory and home truth that rules in Smithville, the currency is the shaggy dog story, from tragic parable to slapstick sermon, sometimes the one hiding inside the other . . . Smithville has its suicides and its homicides; this town can ap-

pear full of village idiots, like those bearded geezers set up on the corner, harmonizing on what sounds like a 1957 Dell-Vikings B-side they can’t remember. . . . Here the streets are even less well marked than the streets in Smithville. The citizens are more adept at disguises.

And yet, Marcus insists, Smithville and Kill Devil Hills resemble each other “like outposts on the same frontier,” not just in terms of musical forms but “in the way they match the unknown to the obvious, in the high stakes the citizens of both towns place on a bet that may not be legal anywhere else—the bet that anything can be transformed.”

Marcus’s direct linking of Smith’s *Anthology* and *The Basement Tapes* is, to be sure, a contrivance, which sometimes creaks under the weight of his own metaphoric and allusive excesses. (When I found him mentioning Dorothy in Oz and Joe Pesci and deeply obscure forties mystery novels, I couldn’t help being reminded of Robbie Robertson’s comment about some of the basement-tape recordings: “Reefer run amok.”) Still, it is a helpful contrivance, one that explains a great deal about Dylan’s often misunderstood music, above and beyond the basement sessions. Take, for example, one of the quintessential early Dylan songs, “Hard Times in New York Town,” a seemingly straightforward Guthriesque tale of a country boy’s mishaps in the big city. In fact, it is a direct steal of “Down on Penny’s Farm,” a story of mistreated tenant farmers—recorded by the Bentley Boys in 1929, transcribed in John and Alan Lomax’s *Our Singing Country* (1941), and included by Smith as his song number 25.

FOR DYLAN, in 1961, it was easy enough to turn a song about country woes into one about city woes, and win the folk revivalists’ hearts. Four years later, however, at Newport, when Dylan took the same farm story, twisted it some more, changed Penny’s name to Maggie, and amplified everything, the folkies rebelled and an enraged Alan Lomax menaced Dylan’s sound equipment with an ax. No wonder that Dylan, momentarily unmasked, wept onstage. And no wonder that, thereafter, when Dylan refused to turn back,

almost everybody, rockers as well as folkies, missed the point.

At bottom, what the world of hype, led by the Top-40 deejay Murray the K, began to call Dylan's folk rock—Dylan, for his part, called it "historical traditional" music—was not just an electrification of the lines and chord structures of Smith's songs and Lomax's, but an amplification of their mystical spirit. "[I]t was as if [Dylan] saw traditional music as being made less by history or circumstances than by particular people, for particular unknowable reasons," Marcus explains, "reasons that find their analogues in haunts and spirits." The recognizable events and persons of Dylan's earlier compositions—break-ups with his (unnamed) girlfriend Suze Rotolo, the slaying of Hattie Carroll or of Medgar Evers, a comic imaginary phone chat with President Kennedy—gave way to mythic or imagined persons in wholly magical situations: Ma Rainey and Beethoven unwrapping a bedroll, Captain Arab's crew encountering Columbus, Abraham, and Isaac on Highway 61, Madonna and Louise and Johanna adrift amid coughing heat pipes. Beginning in 1965, as Marcus indicates, Dylan's music shattered the folk revival's received identities and understanding of the world—but in doing so advanced a musical tradition in which Dylan had long before taken his place, alongside Bascom Lamar Lunsford, Clarence Ashley, and so many others, the tradition of the old weird America.

And that, Marcus says, was not all. In Smith's *Anthology*, and in the basement tapes, he hears the echoes of even grander American prophecies, warnings, and judgments, as pronounced first by John Winthrop aboard the *Arbella*, later by Abraham Lincoln at Gettysburg and at his second inaugural, and finally by Martin Luther King Jr. at the March on Washington, in a speech that, more than thirty years later, "still sounds like a miracle unfolding, a waking of the dead." Like a vagabond unlicensed professor, Marcus appears to be reviving yet another tradition, a tradition of trying to see America (and American culture) whole, as a definable thing, not merely as a gaggle of subcultures—what used to be called American studies before American studies turned into identity politicking and postmodern ironizing.

These passages are, unfortunately, merely suggestive, the looming shapes of a more ambitious work that I hope Marcus writes some day. It is enough, for now, that he has given us his Dylan book—and with it, as if he could not have planned it better, an enriched understanding of what Dylan is up to right now, his latest "historical traditional" recurrence.

I FIRST GOT my hands on *Time Out of Mind* on the same concert night that Dylan spoke of Alan Lomax. As I shuffled to the auditorium parking lot, a perfect stranger slipped me a contraband cassette of the as yet unfinished master tape, as if making some prearranged drop-off. (Weird messenger!) Even in its rough form, played through a friend's Volvo's tape player, the music sounded like an immense improvement over Dylan's last few albums of original material, full of striking love-sick lamentations and ur-American rhythms, from Louisiana voodoo to western swing. But only when the CD actually appeared did I really notice the Marcus connection.

First of all, there is the packaging, including the CD's twenties' vintage blue Columbia label, with its archaic technical slogans ("Vivational Recording"; "Electrical Process"). Then there is the music's texture, with its soggy, boggy, squitchy background topped off with a Hammond B-3 organ accompaniment—the closest that Dylan has ever come to recapturing what he once called the elusive "wild mercury" sound of *Blonde on Blonde*. And although some of the poetry is thin, and there are some clinkers among the lyrics, especially when Dylan falls into what Willis once described as his rhyming compulsion—"Now I've been to London, and I've been to gay Paree/I followed the river and I got to the sea"—there are also hair-raising songs of lacklove, depression, and impending death, full of rumbling skies and church bells and girls who turn into birds and swinging chariots and misbegotten travels through Missouri. Above all, there is the album's sixteen-and-a-half minute concluding track, "Highlands," which begins by quoting Robert Burns—a song of longing for what might be Scotland and might be heaven, which becomes a lament about imprisonment in a world of mystery, and then mutates into a

tale of urban loneliness and failed connections that sounds like an Edward Hopper painting put into music.

It's a shame that Harry Smith, dead these seven years, isn't around to hear these new songs, or to be introduced from the stage at one of Dylan's concerts. It's great, though, that Alan Lomax has stuck around long enough for

both. And I hope that one day Dylan, no wasted seer, gets the chance to single out Greil Marcus, the latest unlocker of the secrets of this kind of music and of the republic from which it springs. ●

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Actors on an Empty Stage

Harold Meyerson

ACHIEVING OUR COUNTRY:

LEFTIST THOUGHT IN

TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICA

by Richard Rorty

Harvard University Press, 1998 159 pp \$18.95

ON BEHALF of countless readers whose reaction to most left academic writing over the past two decades has increasingly been not so much either agreement or disagreement as an overpowering sense of *So what?*, the eminent philosopher Richard Rorty has composed a marvelous philippic against the entrenched irrelevance of much of the American left.

The very notion of "achieving our country"—Rorty takes his title for this collection of lectures and essays from the concluding passage of James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*—is a task, he laments, to which the current academic left is utterly unsuited. It has no belief in the country's capacity to reform, and, worse, no aptitude for achieving anything even dimly detectable in the real world. This "spectatorial, disgusted, mocking Left," Rorty writes, "is not the only Left we have, but it is the most prominent and vocal one." And it differs from all hitherto existing American lefts in that it has no agenda for action, is untroubled

by its lack of agenda, and, indeed, does not really believe in such an agenda.

Its mission, rather, is to unmask and decode the texts that the system produces, in the comforting belief that this somehow advances the revolutionary cause. "The contemporary academic Left seems to think that the higher your level of abstraction, the more subversive of the established order you can be," Rorty notes. "The authors of these purportedly 'subversive' books honestly believe that they are serving human liberty. But it is almost impossible to clamber back down from their books to a level of abstraction on which one might discuss the merits of a law, a treaty, a candidate or a political strategy."

In a sense, *Achieving Our Country* is a companion volume to Russell Jacoby's *The Last Intellectuals*, which chronicled the decline of social thinkers who wrote largely for public consumption and the rise of academic theorists who wrote chiefly for their colleagues. But while historian Jacoby considered the institutional changes that led to the increasing insularity of American intellectuals, philosopher Rorty focuses more on the doctrinal and methodological changes that have stranded otherwise perfectly useful disciplines on desert islands of inconsequence. Indeed, Rorty is at his most acute in charting the changes in his own discipline, as it is practiced within the philosophy departments of the English-speaking world. There, the expansive concerns of an Alfred North Whitehead were supplanted by

the close analytical work of an A.J. Ayer—rellegating academic philosophy to the task of “solving problems which no nonphilosopher recognizes as problems.” Rorty fears a similar process is now at work in literature departments, as scholars interested in authorial styles and themes give way to a generation of cultural decoders. “What goes on in Anglophone philosophy departments has become largely invisible to the rest of the academy, and then to the culture as a whole,” he writes. “This may be the fate that awaits literature departments.”

Rorty’s most important insight is into the political worldview of the academic left: that it is essentially nonpolitical. The cultural left may contend that this text affirms the system while that text subverts it, but the system itself remains an abstraction, a power that passes, if not all understanding, at least all attempts at reconfiguring. Before such a power, the very notion of an agent of social change is woefully inadequate. The cultural left, writes Rorty, “still dreams of being rescued by an angelic power called ‘the people.’ In this sense, ‘the people’ is the name of a redemptive preternatural force, a force whose demonic counterpart is named ‘power’ or ‘the system.’” The logical consequence of the current left epistemology, he continues, is virtually to proscribe political action. “Emphasizing the impossibility of meaning, or of justice, as Derrida sometimes does, is a temptation to Gothicize—to view democratic politics as ineffectual because unable to cope with preternatural forces.”

RORTY ALSO offers a more familiar, though no less accurate, critique of the academic left: that it has largely dropped the banner of class, under which all manner of progressives marched until the sixties, and taken up an armful of other banners, for specific races, genders, and sexual orientations. But here, the gap between Rorty the intellectual historian and Rorty the social historian becomes apparent. As a critic of ideas, he offers a withering comparison of the core beliefs of the current cultural left with those of one of its forebears, Walt Whitman. The enshrinement of otherness that pervades the cultural left, he argues, couldn’t have been more alien to America’s greatest nineteenth-century other.

“Whitman had no interest in preservation or protection [of distinct cultures from the incursions of other cultures]. He wanted competition and argument between alternative forms of human life [resulting in a] new culture [that] will be better because it will contain more variety in unity.”

But as social chronicler, Rorty is on somewhat shakier ground. On the question of how class lost its centrality to the American left, he is right to note the New Left’s disaffection from the Old during the Vietnam War, but he greatly understates just how vigorously much of the Old Left shoved the New Left away. And as political strategist, Rorty is shakier still. His appeal for reconciliation between the surviving wings of Old Left and New is mildly bewildering, not only because the realpolitik tendencies of both, greatly aided by Michael Harrington, already achieved a rapprochement during the seventies and eighties. It is also confusing because Rorty’s indictment of the cultural left on campus suggests the nonacademic left would do better repudiating than embracing it. To be sure, Rorty affirms the value of race- and gender-study programs, wishing not to abolish but to augment them with class-study programs as well. But he so convincingly savages the actual intellectual work of the typical cultural-left academic that his call for harmonic convergence falls somewhat flat.

Rorty has a fairly precise image of what an engaged academic left would look like: the social science departments of the Progressive Era Midwestern universities, where scholars like John Commons devised the social insurance models on which New Deal liberals would later build. To the extent that socialist academics also developed reforms and reformers, they pass muster with Rorty, too. Today’s academic left, by contrast, “is exactly the sort of Left that the oligarchy dreams of: a Left whose members are so busy unmasking the present that they have no time to discuss what laws need to be passed in order to create a better future.”

So eager is Rorty to demonstrate the singularity and futility of the current academic left that he imposes on virtually all previous left and liberal tendencies of this century a common identity that in fact they did not

share. For Rorty, it is not enough to note that both the liberal and socialist lefts of earlier decades would be at odds with the spectatorial left he decries. "I propose to use the term 'reformist Left,'" he writes, "to cover all those Americans who, between 1900 and 1964, struggled within the framework of constitutional democracy to protect the weak from the strong." And so he links, in order of decreasing plausibility, Michael Harrington and John Kenneth Galbraith, Angela Davis and Jane Addams, Eugene Debs and Woodrow Wilson. He notes approvingly such "bottom-up Lefist initiatives" as the Pullman Strike, the Flint GM sit-down, and "Marcus Garvey's black nationalist movement."

Which is to say, Rorty's political compass conks out altogether once it has guided him through the thickets of the academic left. The problem, I think, is a peculiarly instrumentalist view of political movements, in which an activist's or a tendency's involvement in a particular campaign, rather than any distinctive set of beliefs, becomes its defining attribute. More than that, though, Rorty is wary of the movement sensibility as such: it divides potential allies; it offers a totalistic worldview likely either to explode on the world or implode on the adherent. Nor is Rorty content simply to conclude that the proper pursuit of political man is involvement in campaigns rather than movements. He also revisits American left history and transforms many of its leading movement activists and thinkers into pragmatic problem solvers trundling from one campaign to the next.

Consider, for instance, Rorty's warm but highly idiosyncratic appreciation of this very magazine and its founding editor. In the year *Dissent* was founded, Rorty notes, Irving Howe published an essay in *Partisan Review* that argued that the belief in the unity of modernism and leftism that had characterized portions of the left in the mid-thirties was plainly no longer sustainable. From this, Rorty concludes that this sundering of a once unified worldview was in fact the very essence of Howe's new publication. The founding (and subsequent) editors of *Dissent* "felt able to dispense with membership in a movement. They were content simply to throw themselves into a lot of

campaigns."

But surely Rorty has mistaken Howe's repudiation of the totalistic worldview of a sect, where every question has its answer within the faith, for a repudiation of a democratic movement that offers broad philosophic guidelines to one's understanding of the world. And contrary to Rorty's assessment, what defined both Howe and such other *Dissent*niks as Michael Harrington was their belief in democratic socialism and in the need for a socialist movement, and, indeed, in the key role that that movement could play in deepening and invigorating any number of discrete liberal campaigns. The task of the socialist, Howe wrote in such essays as "The Near and the Far," was to offer a perspective that could inspire and instruct activists both for the particular campaign and the broader social context in which it was situated, as well as to accommodate that perspective to the new realities that campaign might produce. That, in fact, was the very substance of Michael Harrington's life—converting thousands of one-shot campaigners into lifelong movement activists by imparting (and inspiring them with) his understanding of the political and moral meaning of the cause in which they had become involved.

INDEED, THE most glaring flaw of Rorty the social historian is his failure to understand that even reformist campaigns are made by movement people. The CIO would have been stillborn without the zealous ministrations of thousands of communists and socialists who believed in both the historic mission and the moral claim of the working class. The UAW under Walter Reuther, perhaps the key institutional bastion of postwar liberalism, was guided by social democrats with a genuine ideological antipathy to capitalism. And surely, part of the greatness of Martin Luther King Jr. was his ability to inspire a generation of civil rights activists with the certitude that they were involved in a project of cosmic consequence. "The moral arc of the universe is long," King cried, "but it bends toward justice."

There has always been more in the heaven and earth of building a campaign, in short, than Rorty's philosophy admits. What Rorty offers is a kind of latter-day amalgam of Eduard

Bernstein and John Dewey: the final vision, the idea of a final vision, is a distraction at best; our proper task is to find discrete solutions to particular problems. What this Dewey-eyed view of history does not grasp is that victories in Bernstein's day-to-day struggles have usually been won not (or at least, not just) by Bernstein's adepts, but by more visionary crusaders for whom campaigns are surely important, but not simply in and for themselves.

There lurks in Rorty's formulations the implication, at least, that with socialism in eclipse throughout the globe, the only sensible recourse for the entire "reformist" left is the scaled-down campaign freed from the taint of any larger movement. Would that this approach actually worked. A quick look at the city halls and statehouses across America

makes abundantly clear that incremental liberalism in the most localized of settings isn't faring any better than the world socialist project. Absent a movement or movements that can grapple with the market forces that are everywhere eroding the powers of government, the prospects for discrete progressive campaigns are correspondingly bleak.

And yet, whatever Rorty's shortcomings in his newfound roles as political strategist and social historian, his power as a critic of ideas—and the power of his critique of the academic left—is undiminished. He may have failed to evoke the left we need, but he has most artfully dispatched a left we don't. ●

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Foibles of Abundance

John Palattella

THE CONQUEST OF COOL:
BUSINESS CULTURE, COUNTERCULTURE,
AND THE RISE OF HIP CONSUMERISM

by Thomas Frank
University of Chicago Press, 1997
272 pp \$22.95

OVER THE past decade, cool has become the trademark of American consumerism. The triumph of cool is especially apparent in advertisements, as Madison Avenue has discarded the scientific ethos that dominated the trade during the 1970s and early 1980s in favor of an antinomian spirit. Countercultural malcontents like William S. Burroughs and Lou Reed have elbowed aside lab-coated spokespeople. Screaming guitar solos, psychedelic graphics, and jump cuts have supplanted bar graphs and pie charts. Most important, the ironic wink, not the faux-

populist taste test, reigns supreme. Ads for Nike, Reebok, and Benetton regularly flatter consumers by poking fun at advertising, effectively saying, yes, we know you're too cool to fall for consumerism and all its ills—its conformity, shoddiness, deception, and waste—which is precisely why you're cool enough to buy our product. All advertisements are bogus, the argument goes—except, of course, the ad making the argument.

Tom Frank has distinguished himself in the pages of *In These Times*, the *Nation*, and the *Baffler*, of which he is editor in chief, as an outraged critic and historian of hip consumerism, a modern Isaiah crying out in a wilderness of navel-piercing salons and Gap ads. In *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism*, his ambitious new study of the advertising and menswear industries of the 1960s, Frank channels his outrage into some serious historical spadework. He proposes that cool first became a dominant advertising style not in the mid-1980s but the late 1950s; and rather than regarding cool as evidence that business co-

opted the counterculture, he claims cool first bubbled up in the minds of alienated capitalists. "In the late 1950s and early 1960s," Frank contends, "leaders of the advertising and menswear businesses developed a critique of their own industries, of over-organization and creative dullness, that had much in common with the critique of mass society that gave rise to the counterculture. Like the young insurgents, people in more advanced regions of the American corporate world deplored conformity, distrusted routine, and encouraged resistance to established power."

Whereas some young insurgents embraced anti-anticommunism, corporate dissidents opted for cool. In certain respects Frank has written the history of a sensibility, and nothing is more evocative of that sensibility than the advertising campaign for Volkswagen that the Doyle Dane Bernbach agency (DDB) launched in 1959. In both content and style, the campaign scorned the puffery and obsolescence that fueled the automotive industry. Whereas magazine ads for Detroit's Big Three used Technicolor to glamorize tailfinned behemoths, early VW ads were in a minimalist black and white, and they either highlighted the VW's functional ugliness or downplayed its visual features altogether. One ad didn't even picture a VW, except for a pair of tire tracks in the snow. The copy, meanwhile, relied on plain speech and humor to ridicule Detroit's annual restyling sprees. A 1961 ad pictured a spotlighted VW, with the caption, "The '51 '52 '53 '54 '55 '56 '57 '58 '59 '60 '61 Volkswagen." Indeed, like the VW, the ads themselves were so similar in format that in 1963 DDB produced an ad containing nothing but instructions on "How to do a Volkswagen ad." And with that pitch, cool, the precursor to the ironic wink, was born.

Cool sparked a revolution in the advertising industry, and Frank puts his history of that upheaval into the service of a more ambitious project. He wants to explain the genesis of the most profound cultural revolution of the 1960s, one that has gone unremarked among historians of the decade: a business-driven transformation of consumerism that made rebellion against consumerism into consumerism's ideology. Call it the retailing of revolu-

tion: gray-flannel rebels trumpeted consumer goods as antidotes to the waste and obsolescence of mass society. "What changed during the 1960s were the strategies of consumerism, the ideology by which business explained its domination of national life," Frank ventures. "Now products existed to facilitate our rebellion against the soul-deadening world of products, to put us in touch with our authentic selves."

TO MAKE his case, Frank places business culture, and particularly advertising, at the center of the history of the 1960s instead of the periphery, which leads him to reject several standard portraits of the era. Whereas conservatives like Robert Bork blame the counterculture for the demise of traditional values in the 1960s, Frank claims the source of permissiveness during the era was capitalism itself, in the guise of advertising and menswear, which disparaged tradition and celebrated individualism and revolt. Nor, to Frank's mind, did Madison Avenue co-opt the counterculture's attacks on postwar conformity; it anticipated them by a good half-decade. Here he veers from standard left accounts of the 1960s, in which the counterculture, squandering its contrarian idealism, sells out at decade's end to mass culture.

When the youth-led counterculture did emerge in the mid-1960s, the advertising and menswear industries "imagined it not as an enemy to be undermined or a threat to consumer society but as a hopeful sign, a symbolically in their own struggles against the mountains of dead-weight procedure and hierarchy that had accumulated over the years," Frank writes. In *The Conquest of Cool*, the true iconoclasts of the 1960s are advertisers and menswear producers, whose malaise was so profound that they turned on the very industries and emblems of conformity they had created in the 1950s—not to eradicate consumerism, but to use distrust of consumerism to make commodities all the more alluring.

Frank sets his history in the Madison Avenue of the early 1950s, otherwise known as ulcer gulch, a monument to overorganization, market research, and the precedents of advertising past. One kingpin of ulcer gulch was

Rosser Reeves, chairman of the Ted Bates Agency. Reeves's method was to conduct market studies and sift through reams of product data to devise a Unique Selling Proposition, a quality that distinguished one brand of product from all others. The results were often banal—Anacin provides “Fast! Fast! Fast! relief”—but Reeves didn't mind because he thought consumers were a shade more intelligent than lab rats. To churn out Reeves-style ads, agencies maintained huge research, art, and copy departments, and they delegated work according to a Taylorized production process and a rigid chain of command that deterred collaboration among different departments. Creativity flourished as little as collaboration. “No longer can the copywriter, like Tennyson's Lady of Shalott, view life through his own magic mirror,” Reeves insisted. “He must make his imagination function under the strict discipline of attaining a commercial goal.”

With the publication of best-selling mass-society critiques like William H. Whyte's *The Organization Man* (1956) and Vance Packard's *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957) and *The Waste Makers* (1960), many Americans grew outraged about the fraud and perfidy lurking behind the facades of Madison Avenue. Whyte alerted readers to the demise of entrepreneurship under the postwar business world's stultifying regime of technocratic efficiency. For his part, Packard exposed how advertisers used motivational research to manipulate consumers and planned obsolescence to package superfluous commodities. Advertisers viewed Americans as a faceless lot who yearned for nothing more than tail fins and TV dinners, a view that appalled Packard because it assumed that consumers acted out of irrational need rather than rational choice. “All this probing and manipulation,” he wrote, “has seriously anti-humanistic implications. Much of it seems to represent regress rather than progress for man in his long-standing struggle to become a rational and self-guiding being.” For Packard, advertising embodied the failings of a democracy in the thrall of corporate capitalism: its materialism, waste, and mind-numbing conformity.

Bill Bernbach, Frank writes, “was Madison

Avenue's answer to Vance Packard.” Bernbach, whose career Frank finds both fascinating and alarming, is the pivotal figure of *The Conquest of Cool*. He emerges as an unsung New York intellectual, a cagey thinker who criticized mass society through its defining medium—advertising. The guiding spirit of DDB, Bernbach rejected most of the industry tenets that drew Packard's ire. He valued creativity over motivational research, favored collaboration between artists and writers, and frowned on conformity and planned obsolescence. He produced ads—like the VW campaign—that relied on graphic minimalism, mocked consumerism, and affirmed defiance and alienation. Bernbach accomplished nothing less than the transformation of advertising into anti-advertising, Frank explains, because he “harnessed public mistrust of consumerism—perhaps the most powerful cultural tendency of the age—to consumerism itself.”

But is Bernbachian cool really equal to mass-society critique? Much of *The Conquest of Cool* hangs on this assumption. Frank views the historical coincidence of cool and mass-society critique as proof of their similarity. One didn't fuel the other; Frank presents no evidence that Bernbach read Whyte or Packard, for instance. Mass-society critique and cool simply occurred simultaneously, and for similar reasons. If you spotlight their differences, though, it becomes clear that their coincidence might be little more than just that. Frank himself admits that the Bernbach-inspired creative revolution “may have questioned hierarchy, conventions of public speech, and the meaning of consumer culture, but it was fundamentally a market-driven phenomenon,” one designed to rejuvenate an industry suffering from creative doldrums and sagging profit margins. If this is the case, then it is too generous to credit Bernbach with developing a full-blown mass-society critique, since he attacked consumer culture only to rehabilitate its propaganda arm, the advertising industry, which was partially responsible for creating a mass society in the first place. For Packard, consumerism and the modern advertising industry go hand in hand; you can't attack one while making an ally of the other.

Moreover, while Packard, like Bernbach,

attacked conformity and planned obsolescence, he didn't think designing hip advertisements, or buying a car, could cure those ills. Packard mixed his utilitarianism with a sense of civic good to preach a decidedly republican kind of social gospel, one that envisioned a commonwealth of small producers participating in a thriving public sphere. In *The Waste Makers* Packard drew on John Kenneth Galbraith and Reinhold Niebuhr when he urged Americans to reverse the postwar trend of "private opulence and public poverty." Besides recommending conservation of natural resources and increases in government spending on public education and health care, Packard encouraged readers to undertake private pursuits, such as painting, sculpture, and reading, to cultivate a more reflective way of life, an antithesis to the world of getting and spending. Say what you will about these pursuits—that they are bourgeois, that they are middlebrow—yet it's hard to deny that they are rooted in a social philosophy and a sense of outrage over consumerism's squandering of social and intellectual resources that are a bracing counterpoint to a cool ad campaign for the VW Beetle. And it's equally hard to deny that Bernbach, hawking a stripped-down mass-society critique, was little more than an opportunistic trader in images that cheapen emotions and inflate expectations—that is, an advertiser.

Yet it's also undeniable that Bernbach had a profound impact on advertising, and when tracing the strands of that story Frank is resourceful and engaging. For one, his account diverges from current trends in radical scholarship on mass culture, which often document the subversive doings of disenfranchised consumers. Instead, he chronicles the decisions of a managerial elite. Moreover, he thinks the symbolism of advertisements, rather than testifying to the qualities of the goods advertised, is an index of advertising's internal dynamics—its need to revitalize itself as a creative industry. This last point is especially crucial, for thanks to some amazing archival legwork Frank is able to muster enough evidence about the motives of ad executives to demolish one of the more tired arguments about advertisements, one made most recently by James

Twitchell in *Adcult USA* (1996): the claim that ads simply mirror consumer desires.

Frank's explanation of the revolution that engulfed the menswear industry reprises the basic points of his history of advertising. In the early 1960s, an industry whose profits were stagnating under the conventions of mass society—literally the gray flannel suit—experienced a creative rebellion. At mid-decade, menswear embraced the counterculture—its sartorial daring, its taste for rock music—as a symbol of its own rebellion against conformity. And like the advertising revolution, the "Peacock revolution" fizzled out during the recessions of the early 1970s. There is a twist to Frank's portrait of the Peacock revolution, however. Whereas advertising's insurrectionaries initially pitted cool consumerism against obsolescence—the VW against the Cadillac—menswear designers and retailers used fashion to accelerate production and marketing cycles. They made cool into an instrument of obsolescence, thereby clinching the profitable relationship between retailing and revolution.

DESPITE ITS strengths, *The Conquest of Cool* can't bear the weight of Frank's conclusions about cool's social implications. "The 1960s are more than merely the homeland of hip," he offers, "they are a commercial template for our times, a historical prototype for the construction of cultural machines that transform alienation and despair into consent." This is a bleak conclusion in part because it is such a vague one. Frank hypothesizes that advertisers preempt criticism of consumerism with advertisements that poke fun at themselves, using skepticism about consumerism to promote brand loyalty. ABC, for instance, last year launched an ad campaign that promoted its fall lineup by mimicking some oft-repeated complaints about television. "Don't worry, you've got billions of brain cells," assured one ad. "Books are overrated," cooed another—and this from a company that published *Joan Lunden's Healthy Cooking*!

Yet the true test of Frank's hypothesis would be to consider how people experience hip ads. It's erroneous to draw the conclusion that cool advertisements—and by extension capitalism itself—are impervious to criticism

based solely on an analysis of their content. In fact, although advertisers do link mass-produced products with corporate-sponsored images of rebellion, this marketing strategy has the baleful consequence of scotching dissent only if people like Rosser Reeves are correct in thinking that consumers are a bunch of dolts who will devour whatever semiotic bone is tossed their way. Surely Frank is not the only person to have endured thousands of cool advertisements yet remain skeptical of their patently fatuous images of dissent—and the brutal class realities those images conceal. Shortly after the ABC “Don’t Think” ads first appeared in New York City subway stations this past August, someone, or a group of protesters, was undeceived and pasted stickers on them that declaimed: “ABC/DISNEY: Sweatshops in Haiti/Union-busting in the U.S.” Manufacturers use advertising to attempt to control markets, but that doesn’t necessarily mean they can use it to control minds.

The closest Frank comes to addressing reception is in his concluding chapter, where he speculates about hip consumerism’s effect on the counterculture. He takes as his example that impresario of countercultural whimsy, Abbie Hoffman. Frank calls Hoffman’s 1971 tract *Steal This Book*, with its assorted schemes for stealing life’s necessities, “a direct subversion of consumer society” and “commodity fetishism.” As such,

Steal This Book is a rebuke to “the softer, gentler counterculture of 1967” that, devoted primarily to storming the barricades of style, complemented hip consumerism. Well, maybe. Hoffman’s encomium to theft seems more like the apotheosis of consumerism, K-Mart variety: the desire to get something for nothing. Even assuming Frank is right, Hoffman’s hostility to consumerism is little more than Bill Bernbach redux, since *Steal This Book* epitomizes Hoffman’s ability to market a rip-off of mass-society critique.

For all the ways the creative revolution of the 1960s made advertising’s store of images hip, and thereby altered the ideology of consumerism, the reasoning behind ads remains unchanged. Like turn-of-the-century ads that trafficked in images of middle-class bliss, and like postwar ads that traded in images of conformity, today’s ads, though they employ images of rebellion, peddle the same tawdry promises of self-transformation, and still tout consumerism as the only viable American dream. Frank is right; Bernbach and other advertisers did spark a creative revolution in the advertising industry, one that comported well with the counterculture. But in another sense those upstarts weren’t revolutionary at all, for they were still engaged in business as usual. ●

JOHN PALATTELLA writes regularly for *Lingua Franca* and *In These Times*. He lives in Brooklyn.

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Asking the Right Questions

George Scialabba

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

by Stephen Nathanson

Prentice Hall, 1998 144 pp \$19.95

EVERYONE LOVES a good argument; and as we know from the dialogues of Plato, few questions are more likely to get an argument going than "What is justice?" In the most recent entry in Prentice Hall's venerable Foundations of Philosophy series, Stephen Nathanson addresses the economic aspects of this perennial question. *Economic Justice* should generate many lively arguments—and not only, one hopes, among its primary student audience. It's a book that every reflective citizen can profit by.

To whittle this immense subject down to size, Nathanson concentrates on three economic systems—libertarian or laissez-faire capitalism, statist socialism, and the welfare state—evaluating them by three criteria: productivity, desert, and liberty. About each system he asks: "How well off does it make people? Does it reward people in accord with what they deserve? And, what is its impact on people's liberty?"

Productivity is capitalism's strong suit, and Nathanson gives it full credit—as did Marx and Engels, who wrote in the *Communist Manifesto* that "the bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarcely a hundred years, has created more massive and colossal productive forces than all preceding generations together." But producing wealth is not the same as producing well-being. The latter depends at least as much on distributing wealth in ways that maximize its happiness-producing effects (or, as economists would say, its *marginal utility*). Severe economic inequality has been the rule rather than

the exception in capitalist societies. Is this a necessary or merely an accidental consequence of the operation of unregulated markets? And if it is a necessary consequence, can it be justified by capitalism's overall high output?

This is (or at any rate, ought to be) the central political issue of our day. Nathanson's treatment of it is penetrating and judicious, emphasizing exactly what needs to be emphasized. First of all, he acknowledges, inequality is not inherently unjust. What is immoral is not that some people have too much but that other people have too little; the one is not always the cause of the other. The Soviet, Chinese, and other formerly state socialist regimes made it a crime to be rich (actually, even moderately well off), which led, as capitalism's defenders point out, to cruelty, inefficiency, and stagnation. So a first approximation to economic justice would seem to be: a decent minimum for everyone, and then let government *laissez faire*, or mind its own business.

Of course, it's not quite that simple. As Nathanson points out, the distinctively dynamic character of capitalism—in a word, investment—means that inequalities are cumulative. *The rich get richer and the poor get poorer; Them as has, gets; You have to spend money to make money*: these are not merely folksy sayings but rigorous and inescapable deductions. As a result, even a decent minimum for everyone will require continuing redistributive efforts by government.

A final point about inequality that Nathanson does well to stress is its effect on liberty. Defenders of capitalism correctly point out that so far, all democratic societies have been market-oriented. But it's also true that in a market-oriented society, political influence is, to some extent, available for purchase like any other commodity. Lobbying, campaign contributions, and media exposure require

money, time, and skills that ordinary people don't have and that rich people and corporations can buy. This is undemocratic. Continuing government efforts will be needed to prevent economic inequality from turning into political inequality.

BUT, SOME readers will ask, doesn't justice simply mean that people ought to get what they deserve? And don't people who work harder or have more valuable skills deserve to get more than others? When faced with difficult questions, philosophers make distinctions. Nathanson distinguishes between personal desert, which is due our individual efforts and achievements, and human desert, which is due us simply in virtue of our humanity. In theory, capitalism rewards personal desert, though as Nathanson points out, many people, especially in other countries, work long hours and receive very little, while others receive a great deal through inheritance or investment income, without themselves working. And of course, rich and poor children don't personally deserve their very different life chances. The notion of human desert implies that everyone deserves enough resources to support a minimally decent life. Once this principle is granted, we can haggle over what is *minimally decent* and how much is *enough*. What we can no longer do is let the devil take the hindmost—the *laissez-faire* solution.

Nathanson calls his preferred solution the "comprehensive welfare state." It would rely on the market and would therefore allow considerable inequality; but it would raise enough money through taxation to guarantee every citizen sufficient resources to live a life free from insecurity and acute deprivation, and it would try determinedly to curb the power of money in politics. This may not sound like a radical ideal, but although a few European countries approximate it, the United States still has a long way to go before reaching it.

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I could say more in praise of *Economic Justice*, but I don't want to leave the impression that it's flawless. It is a convincing book, but not quite a compelling one. It ought to be livelier—not only because today's undergraduates, raised on television, are scarcely able to sit still for philosophical argument, but also because the case for economic justice must appeal to the heart as well as the head. After all, as Shelley wrote in *A Defense of Poetry*, "the great instrument of moral good is the imagination"—and that means stories. For the benefit of future editions of this excellent little book, I offer Stephen Nathanson an example from—all places—television.

In one memorable episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, the starship *Enterprise* encounters a derelict ship full of twentieth-century humans in suspended animation. One of them is an ace investor and dogmatic libertarian capitalist. As soon as he is revived, he demands that the *Enterprise* turn around immediately and return him to Earth, where his large fortune (compounded annually for four hundred years) awaits him. Captain Picard demurs, explaining gently that wealth and poverty, luxury and want, became obsolete on Earth long ago; in the twenty-fourth century, each person has enough resources to live a full life and no one's life is wasted.

It is Picard's *tone* that speaks across the centuries to us viewers—the same tone that an educated twentieth-century person would use in explaining to a visitor from an earlier era why, for example, we no longer burn widows or expose girl babies on mountaintops or torture captives or enslave other peoples. We have outgrown all that, we would explain patiently to our visitor; we can no longer, with a good conscience, inflict or ignore suffering on such a scale. And the still more grown-up humanity of the future, Picard seems to be saying, will consider the accumulation of vast wealth and power by some, while the lives of many others are stunted, to be equally benighted. I suspect that a great many *Star Trek* viewers were converted that evening to a belief in the comprehensive welfare state. ●

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The Meaning of Politics

Ronald Aronson

THE POLITICS OF MEANING:
RESTORING HOPE AND POSSIBILITY
IN AN AGE OF CYNICISM

by Michael Lerner
Addison-Wesley, 1996
338 pp \$24, \$13 paper

THOSE OF us who are trying to rethink left politics cannot avoid coming to terms with Michael Lerner. Many of us have been saying that morality and values must be given a central place in the politics of social justice, alongside traditional left emphases on material need. Others have been looking to recapture "our" issues from the right—insisting, for example, on the priority of values over the iron logic of the marketplace, or focusing on how hard economic times harm families. Enough of us have turned to psychotherapy and religion to know that the left must eventually confront, and work through, their political implications.

Michael Lerner stands across our path, having synthesized these concerns into a "politics of meaning." He has moved with enviable success, founding and shaping *Tikkun*, influencing Hillary Rodham Clinton's April 1993 health-care speech, creating "Summits of Ethics and Meaning" and related gatherings as well as a foundation, a summer camp, and a Jewish congregation for which he serves as rabbi.

The Politics of Meaning is a book-length explanation of Lerner's project, its goals, and its intellectual underpinnings. The first chapters set out the key themes. Lerner believes that we are all hungry for meaning and purpose, for a wider sense of connection and a community of caring. These "meaning-needs"

are denied both by "the dominant ethos of selfishness and materialism" and by the left's narrow materialist conception of human needs. The left also mirrors the larger society in excluding and ridiculing ethical and spiritual goals. In keeping with the prevailing ethos, we all learn to manipulate others in a cynical pursuit of materialist goals, coming to see ourselves as isolated individuals disconnected from each other and from our original childhood sense of awe. And yet the hunger for "community, recognition, and higher purpose" persists, frustrated, leading to pain, cynicism, and self-blame. The deprivation of meaning is behind "most of the violence, destructiveness, and other irrational behavior we see in daily life," and is also behind the widespread recent turn to the right.

Of course economic issues are important, but they "cannot be understood apart from the level of solidarity and the framework of meaning that exists in the society." The feeling of belonging to "a large community of caring" recedes into the past; isolated, we are unable to imagine ourselves as part of a larger and mutually supportive "we." Given this reading of today's "crisis of meaning," it should come as no surprise that Lerner's animus "is not necessarily aimed *against* the rich [or against capitalism, about which Lerner claims to be "agnostic"] but rather against the ethos of selfishness and materialism."

It should be clear that *The Politics of Meaning* is an effort to articulate a new vision, one which overlaps with many of the left's traditional concerns, but that deliberately separates itself from the left and simultaneously tries to steal the right's thunder by emphasizing spiritual and "meaning oriented" questions. It moves along its own distinct axis and is marked by its own coherence. If at times it moves in familiar directions, at others it moves in ways that run counter to the politics of social jus-

tice as we have come to know it. Consider Lerner's five goals of the politics of meaning:

1. "To create a society that encourages and supports love and intimacy, friendship and community, ethical sensitivity and spiritual awareness among people."

2. "To change the bottom line"—that is, to change society's priorities from increasing wealth and power to the above.

3. "To create the social, spiritual, and psychological conditions that will encourage us to recognize the uniqueness, sanctity, and infinite preciousness of every human being, and to treat them with caring, gentleness, and compassion."

4. "To create a society that gives us adequate time and encouragement to develop our inner lives."

5. "To create a society that encourages us to relate to the world and to one another in awe and joy."

Although Lerner stresses that the politics aiming at these goals will rethink "every aspect of our public and private lives," he is equally clear that the primary terrain of the struggle is the realm of values: the immediate goal of his politics is "shifting society's discourse—from selfishness and cynicism to one of idealism and caring." In other words, for the moment, the most important task is to change *how we talk* about the key issues facing us.

This may mean encouraging policies such as universal health care—but the reason for this is that "we are never going to build a society that rejects selfishness while denying equal access to health care." Further, Lerner writes, our health-care system should be one that "links physical health to our ethical and spiritual well-being." This makes it clear that Lerner's is not just a spiritualized politics of the left, but one that makes its demands for its own reasons even when it overlaps with traditional left demands. When Lerner calls for family supports (including liberal economic ones) it is because the goal is to "create a society that is safe for love and intimacy." His preoccupation is not primarily to meet survival needs or to serve the rights of individuals, but to create societies "that nourish loving relationships."

More broadly, Lerner calls for a politics that respects our need to "be recognized by and connected to other human beings, and to the life force that pulsates through the universe."

This life force leads us to public "spiritual energy surges," as seen years ago in Martin Luther King's campaign against racism, and as seen today in the debased form of right-wing Christianity; in our collective love of spectator sports; in sexuality, however alienated in our society; in music and dance, however they form pseudo-communities at present; in "hate radio" as a deformed response to studiously neutral and lifeless media. The core of Lerner's critique of liberalism is that in its acceptance of the prevailing isolation, individualism, and selfishness it ignores our need for connection and meaning. Liberal solutions are not solutions at all, not because, as radicals have always noted, they leave untouched the systemic roots of social problems, but because their individualism and hostility to spirituality perpetuates and even deepens the void most people feel in their lives, leaving the right free to respond to the widespread hunger for meaning in its racist and authoritarian ways.

GIVEN THE publicity Lerner received after the Clintons' momentary embrace of his watchwords, it is not surprising that *The Politics of Meaning* should have been reviewed in the *New York Times Book Review*, *Time*, and the *Atlantic Monthly*, or that *Harper's* should have devoted a major

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article, by Peter Marin, to a critical assessment of Lerner's politics. But what is remarkable is that the left should have remained so silent. Except for a glancing public attack now and then, we on the left mostly deal with the phenomenon of Michael Lerner by rolling our eyes at his excesses, telling stories about his campaign of self-promotion (see the revelations in *Harper's*, March 1997), condemning the self-generated cult of personality swirling around him, or gossiping about his efforts to impose the politics of meaning on writers for *Tikkun*. Lerner is much discussed on the left, but privately; serious evaluations of the political and intellectual content of his politics have been few and far between.

Accordingly, I have presented the key themes of *The Politics of Meaning* in some detail so that the reader may encounter them as fairly and directly as possible. My evaluation begins with the striking sense of contradictoriness that dominates the book. I welcome Lerner's effort to bring back so much that is now suppressed, discouraged, and roughed up by left politics as we know it—his attention to such frail impulses as hope and the need for meaning, his admirable insistence on treating small daily acts of caring as political and connecting them with larger social transformations, his determination to open politics to currents of spirituality and religion. At its best, *The Politics of Meaning* is an effort to reconnect with certain vulnerable and easily routed subjective sources of the demand for a just and humane world—a realm we urgently need to recover, protect and, to use one of Lerner's favorite terms, nurture, if a progressive movement worth our commitment is to be reborn.

But in tone and style, in the way his ideas build, in his relationship to his reader, in the purposes of his project, Lerner all but cancels out these starting points. He leaves nothing open or vulnerable about the presentation of even his best ideas, as each one becomes caricatured by a plodding and leaden style, by a totalizing and reductive approach, and by the self-preoccupied and ultimately domineering subjectivity that stands behind them and keeps intruding itself into the text.

CONSIDER THE fact that, as Lerner defines it, a new politics must cover *everything*. This means that *The Politics of Meaning* overreaches on principle. It is built on a range of experience and knowledge simultaneously too sweeping and too thin. Lerner sounds like a young man just converted to radical politics in the old days, as if a few blinding insights, in this case psychotherapeutic and religious, give him the right to pontificate on the entire range of experience. Lerner attributes both crime and right-wing politics to "meaning-deprivation" much the way a new recruit to dialectical materialism might have once derived all social problems from the structures of capitalist exploitation. *The Politics of Meaning* tends toward the reductionist and dogmatic, rooted in a kind of mental hydraulics familiar from pop psychology: meaning-needs, blocked here, take that vicious or hopeless outlet there or, dammed up, find an even more dangerous subterranean release later. It is a sweeping, and embarrassingly simplistic, approach to human beings and to human needs.

More seriously, this mix of religion and psychotherapy recalls the hubris of not a few twentieth-century doctors of the soul who have sought to apply psychotherapeutic insights beyond the consulting room to lead groups and masses to what they "really need." Lerner claims to know this better than we do, poor benighted souls out of touch with our frustrated inner selves. This is not just an intellectual failing; it betrays a disturbing arrogance. Most left intellectuals who once believed it have long since given up the communist certainty that, understanding the dialectic of history, they knew better than the masses themselves where their real interest lay. Here too Lerner is moving in the opposite direction from the left's hard-won end-of-century humility, back to a psychological and spiritual Leninism. A remarkable passage conveys his hubris:

The politics of meaning is a strategy aimed at helping us reconnect with that part of ourselves that . . . knows we all have had moments that gave us a glimpse of how we might transcend our fears and come together in hope, and that knows that all the cynicism is primarily congealed hurt and disappointment

about what happened when last we hoped and then lost our hopes (perhaps prematurely). And yet, precisely because these hopes make us feel vulnerable and scared, most people have a high stake in dismissing a politics of meaning, and staying as hard-nosed and "realistic" as they can, even while they wish that someone could move them and others beyond their doubts.

The sad truth, I have learned, is that there is no one else but us—you and me, reader. . . .

It is all here, the one-size-fits-all explanation, the psychologizing interpretation in advance of those of us who disagree, the claim to know more about us than we do, and the attempt to do therapy on us by appealing to our secret soft and vulnerable side. And then, after carrying out this invasive strategy on the resistant reader, Lerner reaches down from the guru position he has constructed, offering each of us a touch of intimacy.

More than a clever way of disarming opponents, these tactics suggest a cultish, perhaps even authoritarian side to "the politics of meaning." There is in all this the implicit claim to know the few simple laws governing human reality *and* our inner nature *as well as* our hidden feelings and *the ways we are in pain*. The personal becomes political with a vengeance in this unholy marriage of psychotherapy and religion. In the name of being true to our needs, of liberation from selfishness and, indeed, in the name of hope, Lerner writes in a style that often seems self-congratulatory and self-aggrandizing. It should not be surprising that a world that has made chutzpah into a positive trait should produce such a project.

BUT WHAT if *The Politics of Meaning* were free from its reductionist and totalizing tendencies, from its author's bent for acting as the charismatic leader? At least three core problems would remain. Underscoring them may indicate why the politics of meaning is not really a politics of the left.

First, produced from an intertwined psychotherapeutic stance and religious commitment, the politics of meaning inevitably regards people much as contemporary corporations and governments do, not as democratic

subjects whose will matters above all, but as bundles of needs to be deciphered, redirected in "appropriate" ways, and then satisfied. That is, the politics of meaning is undemocratic at its core.

Second, with its focus on "the ethos of selfishness," Lerner's politics of meaning can never understand, let alone tackle, the sources of the problems it raises. One source, which Lerner takes as product rather than cause, is the network of institutions and power relations causing oppression, domination, and exploitation—which the left has traditionally and quite appropriately devoted itself to understanding and changing. Another is the process of detraditionalization and secularization, which, like it or not, has been inseparable from the evolution of modernity. Thus our world lacks "meaning" for at least two reasons, both ignored by Lerner: it is a posttraditional world whose old authorities and customs have abdicated or been dethroned; it is a capitalist order where individuals and groups left to find their own bearings are not yet free to do so. That is, they live under the increasingly overbearing sway of institutions and priorities, as well as culture, invading every sphere in the service of maximizing profits.

Third, let me stress my dissent from Lerner's key theme of selfishness. Lerner demands a politics that *meets our deeper needs* and simultaneously launches a finger-wagging attack on "materialism and selfishness." There is something incongruous about this. Lerner's is, paradoxically, a *me-centered* politics, in which the search for meaning displaces the search for justice. A therapeutic sense of what we spiritually need becomes the rallying cry, instead of a new way of thinking about spiritual *and* material needs in relation to what is fair and right for all.

The best of Michael Lerner's concerns emerge directly from the shared experience of a generation. As such, they deserve a place in the next left. But we do not have to embrace Lerner's psychotherapeutic/religious politics to counter our tendencies to hopelessness and disillusion. We can avail ourselves of our own left traditions of caring and of belonging to a meaningful historical process. Struggles for justice are usually accompanied by rich and

emotion-laden rituals, and many of us can point to a hundred texts and a dozen experiences that gave meaning to our lives, moments lived as gratifying approximations of what humans can be. Those of us who are secular have had little difficulty appreciating that some of our religious comrades might see the hand of God in such experiences. Few would deny that at such moments history seemed to have a meaning, or that we were individually and collectively acting on a higher moral vision. Re-

sponding to Lerner's challenge means, among other things, to recover and clarify these moments, to give our experiences of hope and meaning and morality their rightful space as part of a politics of justice. ●

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Another Round . . . and Round

Editors:

Speaking of the "gramophone mind." Is it really fair to present your readers with Paul Berman's previously published letter in the *New Republic* ("A Fanatic's Journey," Winter 1998) and to suggest it is part of a mind-opening "vivisection" when it's just a return to the gramophone? A writer of such impeccable ethical standards ought to know that it ain't kosher to review a book by an author the reviewer already detests. I have no quarrel with Berman's general evaluation of the mind of David Horowitz, but his own conclusions are indeed the product of the gramophone mind. He has so frequently informed us of his courageous anti-Stalinism and the insidious corruption of all those who have not made their own hatred for the Soviet totalitarian more explicit that it sounds like the "music going down and around." Once again we are treated to his brilliant analysis of the Sandinista failures and the immense popularity of the *contras*. One keeps hearing of the death of the cold war, but I guess we can count on the Paul Berman and David Horowitzes to keep beating the dead horses.

MICHAEL WRESZIN
New York, N.Y.

Editors:

Paul Berman's review of David Horowitz's *Radical Son* damages both his own and *Dissent's* reputation for civility and fairness. His reference to Horowitz as a "demented lunatic" is a reprehensible lowering of standards of political and intellectual debate. Such name calling and ad hominem attacks have a long and sorry history on the left. It is a sad day when a serious journal like *Dissent*, which has distinguished itself from the left's less appealing features, sinks to this level.

I do not write this letter out of agreement with Horowitz's current political opinions, which he now describes as those of a Gingrich conservative. On most issues, especially those regarding social and

economic equality, my own views are probably closer to the editors of *Dissent* than to his. I think the view of the New Left and of the left in general that he tends to present is not always fair. Yet when I met him personally in the context of the 1988 "Second Thoughts" conference, I was impressed with his intelligence and courage. In his willingness to adopt positions he knows will displease most people he knew from the sixties he has been provocative, but that is worlds apart from lunacy or dementia.

Horowitz is the most prominent leftist who was close to the Panthers to have discussed in detail the crimes, including murder, which the Panthers were said to have committed, as well as the refusal of the New Left, black and white, to face the truth about these crimes. He is the first to have drawn a connection between the Popular Front mentality of the Old Left ("no enemies on the left"), which led to leftist refusal to speak honestly about the crimes of the Stalin era in the Soviet Union, and the New Left's refusal to speak honestly and publicly about crimes being committed by the Black Panther Party. True, Horowitz is not one inclined to nuance and shades of gray, but he refrains from personal attacks. His criticisms of others remain strictly on the level of disagreements about political judgments. For this, however much one may agree or disagree with his political judgments, Horowitz deserves to be praised for his courage, and for his willingness to write critically of his own role. In so doing, he offers a refreshing alternative to the self-congratulatory works about the sixties that have emerged from other leading figures of the sixties left. One need not agree with all of Horowitz's judgments about events and people to recognize that *Radical Son* ought to be included in the canon of essential sixties memoirs. In the future, any historian who aspires to write a fair account of these years must grapple with the issues Horowitz is raising.

Berman wants to have it both ways. On the one hand he presents himself as willing to criticize communism and writes that "the American New Left never did come to a proper reckoning with communism and totalitarianism—or rather, came to a se-

ries of pseudo-reckonings that allowed aging veterans of the left to mutter a few exculpatory phrases about libertarian ideals and to leave the rest of what they had previously thought unchanged." On the other hand, he launches his ad hominem attack on Horowitz and ignores those of us who were in the New Left who have initiated the "proper reckoning" he claims to support.

It is the case that "the American New Left," if understood to refer to most of the former members of the sixties left, has not engaged in a "proper reckoning with communism and totalitarianism." It is also the case that the pages of *Partisan Review* and *Telos* from the 1970s and 1980s are filled with essays in which some of us who were in the New Left moved to our current liberalism through precisely that, in our view, "proper reckoning." As Berman certainly knows, coming to terms with communism and totalitarianism was a central theme of the "Second Thoughts" conference that Horowitz and Peter Collier organized. I have done so in political essays in *Telos* and *Partisan Review*, and in two books, one on the euromissile dispute, the second on political memory in the two Germanys. Ronald Radosh's very important work on the Rosenberg trial shattered decades of denial regarding the reality of espionage. To varying degrees all of us encountered leftist intolerance for our efforts. Yet we also received privately expressed admiration and respect from leftist intellectuals and scholars who were able to accept the shattering of old myths without having their leftist or liberal convictions destroyed. It is regrettable that in light of these contributions, Berman does not acknowledge any American New Leftist intellectual and scholarly confrontation with communism and totalitarianism. Following his review of Horowitz, Paul Berman stands in an undistinguished tradition of intellectuals who tried to delay the growth of our knowledge by attacking the messenger of bad news all the while claiming to be in favor of facing a difficult past.

There remains a great deal of archival research to be done regarding the issues raised by David Horowitz's book and the history of the New Left in general. As that research proceeds we will move beyond the battle of memoirs. One hopes that historians working on these matters will consult Horowitz's book, not as confirmed truth, but as a source of important hypotheses to be tested and questions to be further pursued.

JEFFREY HERF
Oxford, OH

Editors:

When a man begins his review of your life by calling you a "demented lunatic," as Paul Berman does in his bizarre comments on my autobiography, *Radical Son*, the expectation that he will misrepresent you in ways both small and large must be high. Berman doesn't disappoint. To avoid unnecessary tedium, and because my book is readily available, I will confine this reply to three points that illustrate his distortions:

1. Berman portrays me as a Leninist, not only in my adolescence in the 1950s, but as a New Left activist in the 1960s, and even in conservative middle age after I have passed from being a "fanatic" of the left, in his view, to one of the right. As Berman sums me up: "I think [Horowitz] feels that a ruthless disregard for truth and facts is the practical way to proceed on all political questions. . . ." Readers of *Radical Son* will know that my feelings are precisely the opposite. My break with Lenin's duplicitous approach to politics was triggered by a sort of epiphany that occurred in 1953 and is described on page seventy-eight of my text. I was all of fourteen at the time. As I was walking across the Triborough Bridge on my way to a Rosenberg demonstration, I was being instructed by a political mentor in the very Leninist doctrine to which Berman alludes, "that it was necessary to lie in order to advance the revolutionary cause." I rebelled at this idea. "How could we make a virtue of lying, and still advance the cause of truth? Would the Rosenbergs lie about their innocence? . . . In my heart, I . . . felt that Lenin's instruction to be dishonest was wrong. . . ." In fact, it is a theme that runs throughout my book. As I make explicit more than once, this very anti-Leninist rebellion is what *defined* my politics as a New Leftist in the sixties. During that time I avoided joining *any* of the Leninist sects then proliferating in the movement. The same urgency not to evade or suppress the truth in the service of a political idea is what later caused me to risk my life, and lose most of my friends, because I told the truth about the Black Panthers (an action that Berman also distorts by falsely suggesting that Kate Coleman and others preceded me in exposing the Panthers' crimes, which, as he knows, is the opposite of what happened. I was the source for Coleman's courageous article). I still live with an element of risk, far greater than Berman himself has ever experienced, as a result of this political choice.

2. Berman attaches great significance to an "article" of mine that appeared in *Soldier of Fortune* in

January 1987, "an episode in his publishing career that [Horowitz] evidently wishes to suppress." Here is how Berman embellishes the "episode," in the course of adversely comparing my career to that of another second thoughter, André Glucksmann: "Now was [Horowitz's] moment at *Soldier of Fortune*. He became a simple-minded fanatic—the mirror image of his worst (and not his best) moments on the left." In other words, my putative embrace of the politics of *Soldier of Fortune* provides, for Berman, a crucial revelation of my postradical politics. In fact, the "moment at *Soldier of Fortune*" is a pure figment of Berman's imagination. The piece he is referring to was actually a "Speech to My Former Comrades on the Left" that I gave at a Berkeley "teach-in" on Nicaragua, which was held on April 4, 1986. The speech was reprinted (under that title) in *Commentary* in June 1986. (Berman himself replied to it in the *Village Voice* in August 1986, six months before its appearance in *Soldier of Fortune*.) After the *Commentary* article appeared, many journals, including the *Utne Reader* (a left-wing readers' digest) and *Soldier of Fortune*, requested reprint rights. I granted the rights, without exception, to every magazine (and textbook editor) who requested them. Perhaps if I had realized the uses to which future detractors might put this liberality, I would have been more selective. But the idea that I embraced the politics of *Soldier of Fortune* at that time, or any time, is absurd.

3. I was not a "representative of Elliott Abrams," or an "emissary" of Elliott Abrams, when Berman and I met in Nicaragua, as he suggests. At the time, I had not even met Elliott Abrams. I was in Nicaragua with Peter Collier and Ronald Radosh on a trip sponsored by the United States Information Agency. The contretemps with Berman, and Berman's complaint about my reporting of the encounter, have already been answered by Peter Collier in the *Weekly Standard*. Berman did eventually come to the ceremony that re-opened *La Prensa*, but an hour late and after the speechmaking and tearful rendition of the national anthem were over (Berman was delayed by another, more pressing appointment with a leader of a socialist party that supported the Sandinista dictatorship, albeit deploring some of its methods). When Berman wrote about the event in the *Village Voice*, it was to pour scorn on those present as Americans and *contra* supporters. I think my conclusion that "Berman was finally uninterested in the democratic revolution that was taking place all around him" is fair on the evidence.

Finally, the two errors (about Hiss-McCarthy and the World Series) that Berman cites from David Oshinsky's *New Leader* review, were corrected in the galleys (from which Oshinsky wrote his favorable review), and did not appear in the published version of *Radical Son*. Berman would have known this if he had read the book instead of the reviews. I made every effort in writing *Radical Son*, and in preparing both the hardcover and now the paperback versions, to be truthful to the facts as I know them.

DAVID HOROWITZ
Los Angeles, Calif.

Paul Berman Replies:

I called David Horowitz a nasty name. I thought the spirit in which I did that was obvious. It was in the spirit of revenge. Horowitz did a very strange thing to me by purchasing advertisements that made me look like an endorser of his book. And vengeance was mine. Should I have responded in some other way? By suing him, for instance? Michael Wreszin says that to review the book of someone you detest is not kosher. But Horowitz's book says all kinds of terrible things about me. Surely I have the right to answer.

Beneath the silly surface of this present debate, there is an important issue under discussion. It is the question of New Leftism and its response to totalitarianism—a still unresolved matter in many respects. Jeffrey Herf would like to see a discussion of how some of the New Left intellectuals in America evolved in an anticommunist direction. My book *A Tale of Two Utopias* goes on at length about New Leftism and communism and especially about the European New Left intellectuals and their turn against communism. Yet it's true that *Two Utopias* doesn't tell the story of the American intellectuals, apart from the interesting case of Francis Fukuyama, and neither does my article on Horowitz, apart from discussing Horowitz himself. So Herf raises a legitimate issue, and such a history ought to be written.

What would it look like—the story of the American New Left intellectuals who eventually did try to reckon with communism? I think it would look roughly like the story of their counterparts in Europe, except that intellectual developments on the American left have shown less brilliance and originality (I did make that point in my piece on Horowitz) and have had less influence. The first stage in the American New Left's reckoning with communism, beginning in the late sixties and early seventies (and leav-

ing aside earlier precedents and older generations), came, exactly as in Europe, in the form of libertarian leftism. Herf mentions Ronald Radosh's book (written with Joyce Milton) on the Rosenbergs in the mid-1980s.

But Radosh made his most important contribution, in my judgment, much earlier, in the early seventies, when he promoted an idea of libertarian leftism. Radosh's libertarianism of that era sometimes tilted a little shakily back toward the older traditions of a less commendable left. Yet Radosh followed his libertarian principles sufficiently in that period to write a vivid protest against Cuban totalitarianism. That was in a moment when New Leftism was still a mass movement and the cult of Ho, Mao, and Fidel was at its height. We libertarian leftists were a tiny movement in those days, and Radosh was a pioneer, and what he did was brave.

Allow me to add that the political half of my own writings from those long-ago years figured, in a modest young person's fashion, in that same effort to oppose communist tendencies on the New Left. I came out with a paperback in 1972 called *Quotations from the Anarchists* (the very title of which took a swat at Mao), in which I complained, "Much of the Left still labors under a crude Leninist ideology and identifies revolution and the new society with the 'Vanguard Party.'" And I spent the rest of the 1970s and 1980s continuing to complain about Lenin and the communist political tradition, fervently and loudly if not always coherently or consistently, in the columns of the *Village Voice*, the *New Republic*, *Mother Jones*, and all kinds of minor and obscure journals. A number of other New Left libertarians complained in a similar vein—but, of course, we, the complainers, remained a hard-beset and unpopular minority, and not too many left-wingers rushed to our defense, and the circles of New Left anticommunism were small.

The argument against totalitarianism became less utopian, less abstract, more sophisticated, and more consistent during the eighties. It became more popular, too. David Horowitz had always upheld a Leninist interpretation of world events (the passage in his letter denying his own Leninism should not be taken seriously, as you can see with a glance at his own book, for example, page 106, where he describes his New Left ambition to rescue communism from the Soviets). But in the eighties Horowitz, too, together with his colleague Peter Collier, at last came out against communist ideas altogether. I am aware that Herf similarly rethought his position. By the middle

eighties, he, too, finally began to play a part in the criticism of totalitarianism (though unlike everyone else who has been mentioned, Herf, so far as I have known, refrained from presenting his antitotalitarian convictions to any public larger than the intellectuals—he kept his head down by writing for the little magazines).

In turning against totalitarianism, the question was always, however: how exactly to do it? With what set of ideas? I have never objected across the board to every last thing written by the eighties authors whom Herf chooses to celebrate. Radosh and Milton's conclusions about the Rosenbergs won an endorsement from me in *Vanity Fair*. When Horowitz and Collier finally gathered the courage to say something truthful about the Panthers (after having lied about them for many years), I accepted their belated reports, too, in the *New Republic*—even while I criticized the authors on other grounds. In my review of Horowitz's *Radical Son* in *Dissent* just now, I was again happy to acknowledge a value in his account—though the value seems to me quite limited, due to Horowitz's indifference to accuracy.

Among the people who gathered around Horowitz in the mid- and late-eighties, however, the tendency was to fight dogma with dogma. I didn't like the tone of Horowitz's "Second Thoughts" conference for that reason (though I know that some admirable and serious people attended). Horowitz came to think that anticommunism required being a Reagan-like conservative—or something even further to the right. He convinced himself that anything but the most right-wing of rightisms was no anticommunism at all. Jeffrey Herf upholds a philosophy of his own, which is not Horowitz's. Yet I detect in his letter a variation on that same bracing belief in the One True Line. That is why Herf feels entitled to read a haughty lecture about antitotalitarianism to those of us who came earlier to that particular battle and fought longer and in bigger arenas than he ever did.

I had better acknowledge one point where Horowitz must be right, and I must be wrong. Horowitz says he was not sent to Sandinista Nicaragua by Elliott Abrams. Instead he was sent by the United States Information Agency. I stand corrected—and I point out that, in those years, Abrams was in charge of State Department policy on Nicaragua. Horowitz also says that I present a misleading picture of his appearance in *Soldier of Fortune* magazine. But is that true? The editor of *Soldier of Fortune* welcomed Horowitz's contribution to

that journal by writing, in the issue of January 1987 (I have preserved the issue—such are the fruits of undying rancor!), “This is Mr. Horowitz’s first article for SOF. Given his background, the editors feel his opinions are particularly poignant. Welcome aboard, Mr. Horowitz.” The editor’s hearty salute and his expectation of further articles are what led me to suppose that Horowitz’s contribution to the journal of the armed American ultraright represented more than a passive agreement to reprint a single article. But if Horowitz says otherwise today, I won’t argue with him.

One more thing. Horowitz boasts in his letter, at the bottom of his second paragraph, about his physical courage. That comment is the mark of someone who has never held a dangerous job—never been a police officer, a firefighter, a soldier, or (if I may say so) a war correspondent, not even on an occasional basis. Naturally such a man is taken with his own bravery. And naturally such a man has spent his career urging people less fortunate than he to pick up a gun—in his young days as a left-wing promoter of the Panthers, later on as a right-wing promoter of the *contra* war in Nicaragua. Horowitz thinks that he has forsworn his old violent extremism, and his friends and admirers are thrilled at his transformation. But he keeps hinting about a moral superiority that comes from physical danger—which makes me think that, on essential questions, Horowitz has changed not one whit.

In any case—enough! The particular individuals in this debate have been arguing for too long, by about a dozen years.

A Monumental Mistake by Mills

Editors:

Nicolaus Mills’s review of the FDR Memorial (“Monumental Correctness,” Fall 1997) is too critical. The memorial is original, warm, and effective. The use of rushing water is powerful and successful. Lest we forget, water was important to FDR. He loved it, as we know from his years at Campobello. In addition, he was once the assistant secretary of the Navy. The roaring water of the memorial has an effect upon people. It may symbolize the rush of social reform so important in FDR’s first two terms. And the still water in the final section of the memorial may symbolize the end of World War II and the death of FDR.

Mills questions the space of the memorial as being too great. Yet it is well used, and the public, as far as I can see, seems to enjoy walking through a memorial rather than looking at something distant and high above them. The statues of the bread line and the desperate man at the radio are of human proportions. As such, they immediately tell everyone what life was like in the Great Depression years.

There is no giant statue of Roosevelt, which perhaps brings the viewer to the realization that Roosevelt did not want to be distant. No other monument has tried to show a relationship to others the way the statues in this memorial do. I think they succeed and will grow in popularity as the years go by.

Finally, Roosevelt’s well-known sayings are gracefully intertwined with both the water and the granite. The sayings are easy to read; the granite strengthens their conviction. It takes time to enjoy this memorable memorial. It is well worth the experience.

HARRY KAHN
New York, N.Y.

Designing Leftists

Editors:

The Winter issue of *Dissent* is not only the most attractive I have seen in a long time but also substantively the most interesting. Congratulations on a beautiful redesign that makes *Dissent* much more inviting.

IVAN R. DEE
Chicago, Ill.

Editors:

I just yesterday received the redesigned Winter ’98 issue. My compliments to the designer and to the Foundation for a very clean, readable, attractive presentation. And what reading! This issue is terrific. . . . Again, congrats on the new look, the old outlook, and the continued commitment.

CHARLES ROSSI
Media, Pa.

Editors:

I love the new design: it’s hip, retro, and bourgeois in just the right proportions.

GEORGE SCIALABBA
Cambridge, Mass.

Editors:

You were right—the old logo is “clearly recognizable from across the street.” It’s also clearly bet-

ter than the new one!

It seems everyone is busy changing names, layouts, typefaces, colors, etc. As a librarian I find it often frustrating and interesting. And certainly the rest of your changes seem clean, unfettered, easily read, and generally successful.

BUT—that logo is a disaster! It's dirty (catering to the grunge movement?) and not very readable. In short, it looks like all the other "90s" consumer magazines desperate to be popular among the Gen-Xers and other society types (very unleftist!). This is not a logo for the ages.

DEBORAH FALIK
New York, N.Y.

The Editors Reply:

We're not surprised that readers of *Dissent* had these varied reactions to our new design (and there were many more). With this issue, the logo size has been increased by 20 percent. We hope our readers can find it from across the street, and will encourage their friends to look for it also.

To Letter Writers

● We welcome succinct letters from our readers. But because we have a long "lead time" for each issue, you have to send us your letter within three weeks after getting an issue of *Dissent* in order to get it into the next issue. So if you want to write about something that you like, or dislike, in or about *Dissent*, please do it quickly.

● Letters must be kept to about 500 words, typed, double-spaced, and carry the full address and name of the sender. We reserve the right to edit letters down to fit our space and to choose which shall be printed. We are unable to acknowledge letters. Letters will not be returned to senders unless they are accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes.

Erratum

James B. Rule's *Theory and Progress in Social Science* was published by Cambridge University Press.

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International Essay Prize Contest

Liberating the Future from the Past?

Liberating the Past from the Future?

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In the manner of the tradition of Enlightenment Europe's academies of arts and sciences, *Lettre International* and Weimar 1999 - Cultural Capital of Europe, in cooperation with Goethe-Institut, are soliciting responses from a global public and in essay form to the following Prize Question. This announcement is addressed to all persons, anywhere in the world. You are invited to respond to our Prize Question in a creative way and from whatever happens to be your own cultural perspective and background. You should aim to provide the most convincing and conclusive solution possible in a spirit of open competition. On the threshold of a new millennium, this international competition of minds hopes to become a symbol of a creative and cooperative global society in the 21st century. **The Prize Question is: Liberating the Future from the Past? Liberating the Past from the Future?**

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2. Prize DM 30.000
3. Prize DM 20.000

Authors of essays rated first, second and third will be invited to the official award presentation at Weimar, scheduled to take place late in 1999. Prize-winners, as well as authors of other outstanding contributions, will receive a grant or stipend covering several months of study in Germany.

Award-winning essays, along with a choice of entries pre-selected for the Final Jury, will be published in the different national editions of *Lettre International* and in other literary magazines.

We also plan to publish a book containing a selection of those essays presented to the Final Jury in German and other languages.

CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

Everyone and anyone may participate, except for Contest jurors and staff of *Lettre International* and Weimar 1999 - Cultural Capital of Europe. Essays may be submitted in one of the six official UN languages, i.e. Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish, or in German, the Contest organizers' and hosts' language.

Essays may not be submitted which, prior to the official presentation of awards, have been either previously published or offered to third

parties for publication, or which have been entered in any other competition.

Essays should be sent to the International Essay Prize Contest's Secretariat in two typescript copies or via e-mail no later than November 30, 1998. Date as postmark or e-mail protocol. Manuscripts cannot be returned.

Authors of award-winning essays confer the unrestricted right of reproduction - also transferable to third parties - to the Contest organizers. This includes the right of translation and dissemination of essays in any way or form, either in part or in full, and in all languages. Authors whose essays have been presented to the Final Jury, but have not been awarded a prize, likewise confer the right of reproduction

to the Contest holders. In case of publication, these authors will each receive a single remuneration of DM 500,-.

In the event that essays are published in book form, their authors will receive an additional fee of at least 8 per cent of the sale price, proportionate to the length of their essay in relation to the length of the entire book.

TEXTUAL REQUIREMENTS

Essays submitted must not exceed the following limits in length:

- 70 000 characters in German,
- 64 000 characters in English, French or Spanish, (approx. 10 000 words)
- 62 000 characters in Russian,

- 15 000 signs in Chinese,
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In addition, an abstract of no more than two pages must be appended to each essay.

Essays must be submitted in sealed envelopes.

Texts should contain no reference to the author's name or identity. Name and address of sender should be supplied in a separate, sealed envelope. Essays transferred via e-mail must be sent as attachments.

PROCEDURE OF THE CONTEST

All contributions will be anonymized by the Contest's Secretariat, furnished with a numeral code and then passed on to juries. Award-winners will be chosen in a two-step

selection process. The Final Jury will choose prize-winners from a maximum of 49 entries.

1. Between December 1, 1998 and May 31, 1999, seven preparatory sub-juries (one for each Contest language) will evaluate all contributions received in their respective language. Each jury will then propose a selection of no less than three essays to the Final Jury. The sub-juries will be allocated additional essays for presentation to the Final Jury in proportion to the total number of entries received in their respective language. 2. Entries selected by sub-juries will subsequently be presented to the Final - international and interdisciplinary - Jury. The latter's final selection of award-winners will be completed by late October, 1999.

Award-winners will be notified and prizes presented at an official ceremony at Weimar towards the end of 1999.

The seven sub-juries and the Final Jury will be composed and appointed by the Contest organizers in the course of 1998, in close cooperation with the International Essay Prize Contest's Board of Curators.

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Lettre
INTERNATIONAL
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NOT LONG AGO I attended a conference on the theme, "Are serious books in serious trouble?" The question was rhetorical. One by one the suspects were arraigned on charges: publishing conglomerates, superstores, television, public education. By the end American culture itself was on trial, and some of the jeremiads sounded like big-picture attacks on imperialism, with the roles of Nixon, Kissinger, and the International Monetary Fund filled by Viacom, Rupert Murdoch, and Barnes and Noble. Noam Chomsky was frequently invoked as the prime example of a serious writer with books in serious trouble.

The connection became more explicit when a novelist I admire rose to point out that our country was apparently going to make war on Iraq without any meaningful public discussion, and that this was a symptom of the decline of the serious book and of our ability to think, argue, and—more to the point—read. Beneath the applause that spread across the room there was, I felt, an uneasy stir, for we had just been reminded of carnage potentially even bloodier than the slaughter of Basic Books and the local independent. Most of the people in the room were already on shaky moral ground, because what they often meant was "my serious book" and "my serious trouble." It's hard to focus on germ warfare and "collateral damage" when the world, distracted by money and buzz, refuses to notice your existence.

A possible war's intrusion on the conference startled me into a thought, which went something like this: the people here, a few famous, most not, but nearly all consumed with the supremely difficult task of writing something valuable and finding readers for it—the struggle to be noticed—would have been doing something else twenty-five or fifty years ago. They were the sort of people—educated, principled, perhaps endowed with enough comfort and leisure to dedicate themselves to concerns beyond the weekly paycheck—who used to join social movements. They used to be temperance advocates, suffragists, civil

rights workers, antiwar activists. They used to write letters to the editor. Now all that energy, that vast American capacity for moral self-expression, goes into writing books that are not being sold or read. And into marching on behalf of one's own book. In this sense, the activists have themselves become oppressed.

I don't know when it happened, or why, that graphomania and its discontents overtook a large portion of that class of Americans who, when I was a boy, used to harangue the neighbors into attending fundraising parties. But I've grown acquainted with the nature and extent of the phenomenon through teaching writing in adult education and M.F.A. programs, hanging around the offices of small magazines, and attending conferences on serious books and serious trouble. Every articulate person you meet these days turns out to be a writer.

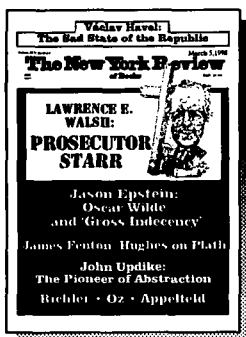
AND WHY NOT? "Everyone needs to write," the novelist I admire said when the conference was over. We all have a story and an urge to tell it. "In every man there is the soul of a poet," said Coleridge. "But most of them are such damned bad ones." Perhaps we need a sharper distinction between the need to write and the desire to be a writer, which inevitably brings added desires for contracts, reviews, sales, reprints. ("Not every book deserves to be reprinted," said one editor on the panel, in the conference's most subversive moment.) Having suffered my share of these desires, as well as making part of a living off them, I'm deeply familiar with the sweet taste of sour grapes. I also realize what's wrong with saying, "Lock the door after me, the party's too crowded," rather like a bumper sticker I once saw on a car with New York plates in a Massachusetts resort town that demanded, "Keep Egremont Small and Beautiful."

Everyone has a right to write. It's in the Constitution. But now and then it's important to step back, as I was obliged to when Iraq entered the room, and ask: what would Americans be doing if we weren't all writing our memoirs? We might be arguing about going to war.

-GEORGE PACKER

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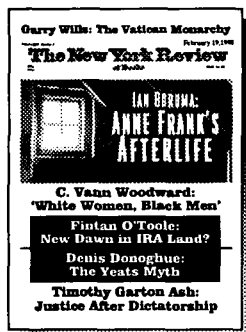
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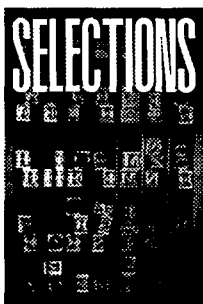
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